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# THE QUARRY



JOHN A. MOROSO

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FRONTISPIECE

“There is a gentleman here who desires to see me on some business.”

FRONTISPIECE. See Page 300.



# THE QUARRY

BY  
JOHN A. MOROSO

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
THOMAS FOGARTY

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# THE QUARRY

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## CHAPTER I

“**W**HAT’S the charge, lieutenant?”  
“Murder.”

Inspector Ranscombe, in charge of the central office of New York’s police department, gave the prisoner before him a second and more searching glance, his keen, gray eyes taking in every line of his features, the arch of brow, the formation of the ears, the jaw angle, the lips, chin, nostrils, the cheek-bones and the eyes.

The prisoner straightened his well-formed shoulders as he returned the glance. He stood with a pair of thin and soiled hands clasped before him. There was a glint of steel at the wrists, the sleeves of his coat only partly hiding the manacles that shamed him. His clothes were

those of a boy from the country, and he wore them awkwardly in the bright, sunny room of the chief of the city's detectives, where everything was spick and span and the uniforms of the office staff as trim and fresh as though just from the department's tailoring contractor.

Ranscombe, a man beyond the half century mark, short and at times brutal in his speech, his heavy jaw and bristling white mustache suggesting latent ferocity, felt a little twinge at his heart as he told himself that this youth bore none of the marks of the born criminal.

"What's your name, boy?" he asked sharply.

"James Montgomery," was the answer, huskily given.

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"Guilty?"

Montgomery shook his head as his lips trembled and the denial of guilt refused to leave them.

The inspector turned to the detective lieutenant in charge of the prisoner.

"What is it, Kearney?" he asked. "A street quarrel?"

"No, sir; bank watchman killed; he's a yegg."

“ A yegg! ”

“ Yes, sir. The West Side National Bank was blown last night. The watchman was murdered. Three men did the job. The policeman on the beat heard the explosion and got this lad. The other two made their get-away. ”

“ You got a case here that won't fall down? ”

“ Yes, sir; it's a good case. ”

The inspector hesitated as if debating in his mind whether to put the boy through an examination. It was the first hour of the day's work and his desk was piled high with reports needing his attention. A score of his picked men were waiting a chance to report personally on various important cases. Lieutenant Kearney seldom needed aid from his chief. He was a detective of experience and one who could safely be trusted to clear up any case.

Ranscombe turned to the pile of documents on his desk.

“ Take him to the identification department and go ahead with the case, ” he instructed the detective.

The fingers of Kearney's right hand gathered up the folds of his prisoner's sleeve until his

grip became vicelike. He wheeled about and started for the corridor, the boy half staggering along with him.

In the main hall of the building they took a rattling and palsied elevator to the top floor. Here they entered a small, dingy room where were scales, a large tripod with a camera topping it, and an iron frame for holding in position the head of the subject to be photographed.

Two identification experts in uniform took the prisoner in hand and photographed him, profile and full face.

Montgomery was then placed on a small platform and his height measurement made. One of the experts filled in an identification sheet as the other took the length of the prisoner's arms and legs, the circumference of the trunk at the navel, and the hips and the chest measurement. With a steel compass the measurement between the base of the nose and the base of the skull was made. The expert called off the length and breadth of the right ear in a droning voice. All the figures went down in ink on the identification blank, a piece of white cardboard six inches wide by four in length.



The man at the desk put down his pen and left his chair, advancing to the prisoner. He stopped directly before him and fastened his eyes on Montgomery's as if to hypnotize him.

The prisoner returned the gaze, his pupils dilating as fear crept into his heart, — a fear that he could not define. He had not slept in thirty-six hours and he had not eaten in twenty-four. He felt as if his body were swaying, but the clear, searching eyes so close to his seemed to hold him to his heels.

Suddenly the eyes of the expert were withdrawn and Montgomery regained control of his senses. He saw the man back at his desk and writing. He was putting into the record the color of the prisoner's eyes, a description of their shape and of whatever peculiarities he had discovered in them.

In his weak and exhausted condition Montgomery was easily bewildered. He was in a state of mild stupefaction as the man with the measuring instruments again began work. Soon the expert's voice was droning out more measurements. The length of the nose at the bridge, its projection at the highest point and at the

nostrils, the height and width and peculiarities of the forehead, the shape of the chin, the nature of the setting and filling of the teeth, their number and condition, the shape of the lobe of the right ear and its border, the color of the hair and its condition were all placed in the record that would make James Montgomery a marked man and easy police prey for the rest of his life.

Kearney unlocked the handcuffs. "Take off your clothes," he ordered.

The naked lad was placed on the scales and his weight taken. The left foot and the little finger of the left hand were measured. The two experts then examined every square inch of the prisoner's body and made note of every mark, mole, scar and cutaneous peculiarity.

As Montgomery feebly struggled back into his home-fashioned underwear and poorly fitting suit of clothes, the Bertillon men studied him carefully and keenly, as if they were two connoisseurs at a county fair passing upon an especially interesting steer. They were seeking material to fill in that part of the record carrying the title line: "Peculiarities of Habit and Action."

They conferred in whispers and decided that the prisoner belonged to the "dopey" class. He was of good frame but appeared listless and weak. They were not medical men and they could not know that malnutrition was the cause of the lad's feebleness and that misery of soul had sent his manhood reeling over the ropes.

With the handcuffs clinking by his side, Kearney took his man into an adjoining room where the grip of the police would squeeze down on the life of James Montgomery with the last possible pound of pressure.

The prisoner was led to a desk on which was a long, white form ruled into twelve rectangles. A Bertillon man caught his wrists and pressed his fingers down upon a marble slab covered with printer's ink. The prints of all the fingers of each hand were made in the record, and then prints of the first joints of the four fingers were made in other rectangles. A pen was handed the prisoner and he was made to sign his name to the sheet of paper. As he lifted the pen from the paper, the Bertillon man grasped his right forefinger and made a separate record of it just under the name.

The police no longer depended on the name or facial characteristics as a means of identifying the prisoner. The name James Montgomery meant little if anything now. But the little whorls, "islands," parabolas and "breaks" showing in the finger-prints in that record forever tagged their man. He might grow old and feeble and so change his appearance that even his own brother would know him not, but the finger-prints would never change; and no other human born on earth would have the same little circles in the skin, which nature so wonderfully and strangely twists in separate designs for each of the human species.

The police record of James Montgomery went into the files and his pictures into the gallery of rogues.

Kearney took his man back to the wheezy elevator and below to the main floor. A short flight of winding stairs took them to the basement and a little prison known as "The Barrel." This cramped and dark place would hold Montgomery until he was arraigned before a magistrate and the slow process of marching through the courts to prison or liberty was begun. Here, beneath

the level of the street, he could send no word to lawyer or friend, and he was as far removed from the saving benefits of the habeas corpus as if he were existing before the signing of Magna Carta.

Pending his arraignment in court, this citizen of the United States was without one single trace of consideration by the law which was written for his protection. A habeas corpus writ might find its way from the roof of the dingy building in Mulberry Street to the front and rear doors, but the "Barrel" in the basement was a strictly and jealously guarded police institution. It was sound-proof and the voice of a prisoner crying out and demanding his right to be heard was as the voice of a sparrow against the roar of the tempest.

## CHAPTER II

THE "Barrel" was aptly named, for no tighter prison was ever fashioned over or under ground. Only one prisoner ever escaped from it, and he was the black sheep in the family of a police lieutenant high in power in the Lieutenants' Association. He did not have to file the steel bars of his cell or bludgeon the moribund turnkey. The doors were left open for him and his way was clear. The details of this escape are all written in the strangely complex and fascinating history of the police department of the City of New York.

A single gas-jet made a yellow smear in the blackness of the "Barrel's" noonday and midnight. The turnkey was often away from his post, sunning himself in winter, chatting with the headquarters reporters from their shanty-offices across Mulberry Street, or in the corridors of the building picking up police gossip. It was safe enough for him to make these excursions,

molelike, from underground, for escape from the "Barrel" without connivance was impossible.

In the tight little police prison the only sound that reached the prisoners was the faint, soft shuffling of feet that somehow managed to work its way like a wireless message through stone, earth and steel from the sidewalk above.

The dragging of the myriad feet began at six in the morning and at eight o'clock the shuffling above reached its greatest volume. It died down and away by nine. At noon the occupants of the "Barrel" heard it swing into full force suddenly and continue until one o'clock. At five in the evening it began again, and at six swelled higher than at any time during the day, as the factories, loft buildings and offices disgorged themselves of the multitudes of workers and the rush for subway, elevated and surface roads began.

During the chaos which followed the destruction of San Francisco, one awful, sinister, frightening sound welled above the turmoil: the steady, rhythmic tramping of many tired feet. It came from the heavily guarded columns of prisoners

being herded from tottering walls to open spaces. It beat on the air in toneless measure as the dropping of earth into a half-filled grave. To the men in the "Barrel" the sound of Manhattan's lock-step and the occasional clank of an iron door were the only breaks in the solemn stillness of death in life.

It was noon when Montgomery groped about his little black cell and found an iron shelf hinged to one of its walls. He threw himself on a dirty, twisted blanket, his body worn out and his mind a blank. His stomach called for food, but he dared not ask for any. The lunch hour tramping of feet above lulled him into oblivion. His tired eyes closed and he slept.

A voice, sounding very faintly at first but gathering volume until his ears ached, awakened him.

"Hell, I thought you was dead," he heard the turnkey say. "Here, take this."

The prisoner dropped his legs over the iron pallet's edge and held out his hands.

The turnkey had brought him a large tin cup filled with beef stew, and the savor of it made the boy's brain reel with the delights of anticipation.



He lifted the cup to his lips and drank from it eagerly. The turnkey handed him a piece of bread. He clutched it, stuck it into the stew and ate of it with little grunts of animal satisfaction.

Montgomery heard the cell door slam and the key turn in the lock. With the last crumb of bread he wiped the cup clean of the last drop of the stew, and over this morsel he lingered as a child lingers over its last bit of candy.

There was no article of furniture in the cell. He placed the tin cup on the floor and again stretched out on the pallet. He could feel the food in his stomach and warmth begin to suffuse his body. As the welcome process of digestion started, the starved, tired lad forgot his sorrows and remembered his miseries no more in dreamless and refreshing slumber.

Simple as was the food, and only too slight for a famished youth, it started the blood coursing healthily through his veins once more. This second sleep brought back his strength, and the fog that had come to his brain while he was undergoing the strange hardships of identification began to lift. When he wakened again he found that nature, replenished with fuel, had cast off

the dread load of despair that had settled upon him.

He knew not whether it was day or night. He rubbed his face briskly, taking a dry bath and equalizing the surface circulation of his blood. He threw out his arms and legs vigorously, removing the kinks in his muscles.

Through the bars of the cell he saw the yellow smear of light and the turnkey sitting beneath it, smoking a pipe. He was debating the advisability of asking the day and hour when the door of the "Barrel" rattled and his keeper bestirred himself.

A man in uniform was admitted. The turnkey placed his pipe in his chair and came to Montgomery's cell.

"Get your hat," he ordered as he unlocked the door.

Montgomery groped about for his cloth cap, found it and stepped out of the cell.

"It's time for the line-up," he was informed. "They want you up-stairs."

In charge of the uniformed man he made his way up the winding stairway and stepped into the blinding sunlight which flooded the assembly

room of the detective bureau. The room was large and wainscotted high with racks of pictures, — the old Rogues' Gallery. In the center of the room was a clump of fifteen men and three women. They made up the police crop of the night before. Yeggmen, burglars, pickpockets, confidence men and a black-browed Sicilian bomb thrower were included in the group. The women, blowsy, frowsy, and insolent, were common thieves.

Montgomery was put in this herd and told to wait there.

A lieutenant in uniform sat at a high desk behind a heavy brass rail, his gray head bowed over the "blotter," a book in which the record of arrests is kept. Half a dozen uniformed policemen were doing duty as doormen.

After a few minutes of anxious, nerve-wearing delay a door opened and on the threshold appeared a man in the garb of a citizen. Montgomery felt the prisoners about him turning in one direction and he turned and looked. He saw the man in the door. There was something uncanny about his appearance and he looked more closely. The man's face was covered with a

black mask. He stepped into the room and another masked man appeared on the threshold.

The prisoners in the center of the room drew closer together. The second masked man entered and a third took his place, to be framed spectre-like and sinister in the white casing of the door.

There was a snicker of contempt from several of the prisoners and a whispered and filthy anathema as the plain-clothes men gradually began to crowd the room. Montgomery counted the first and then the second dozen and still they came, silently, and showing hideous black patches where human faces should have been.

A circle was formed about the little group in the center of the room. The prisoners edged together in a rapidly tightening clump of helpless humanity. The nerve of one of the women began to go. She blurted out an oath at the top of her voice and followed it with an hysterical laugh that was half blubbering.

"There's Red Callahan!" she cried, leveling her finger at one of the masked men. "There's Red, the boy after the graft, the crookedest bull y'vever seen in this town."

Close to Montgomery a squat, long-armed

prisoner with prognathous jaw and sloping forehead began rumbling out expletives. Ugly as were the curses, it was better than silence, this low, animal-like sound of protest.

All the while the eyes of the detectives flashed through the masks as the light would strike them. They peered steadily at the faces and forms within the circle, studying their "Peculiarities of Habit and Action." The hunters would know their quarry again when time came to break open new leads, but the quarry in flight would not know the faces of the men after them.

This was the morning line-up at headquarters. It was as if a number of lithe, blood-thirsting ferrets had been turned into a circular pit for each of eighteen rats, and the rats, being without a corner into which they might crowd for the final struggle for life, had run to the center of the pit to perish back to back.

It was only a matter of minutes but it seemed to James Montgomery, a boy fresh from the countryside, that he had been in this chamber of horrors so long that he had become palsied with the years.

His head was swimming and his heart going

like a trip-hammer when he was shoved into a prison van with the others and taken to the Jefferson Market police court in the lower West Side to be arraigned.

As dismal as was the interior of the ill-lighted court-room, the first glimpse of the black-robed magistrate brought a feeling of relief to Montgomery. He was in a court of justice, an institution designed for people in the very plight in which he found himself. The innocent would here find protection and the guilty would receive punishment. The courts were as much for the people as for the police, he thought.

As the line of prisoners edged along in front of the magistrate's desk, he began to frame the words he would say in his own behalf. Surely he would be given a chance to declare his innocence.

At last it came his turn. He stepped upon the little elevation, known as the "bridge," and looked over the edge of the magistrate's desk. The magistrate did not look at the prisoner but gave all his attention to a document placed before him by a clerk at his right hand. He signed it and gave it to Detective Kearney, who held

fast to the sleeve of the accused. The policeman on duty at the bridge pulled back the prisoner and Kearney started off through the crowd with him. In his right hand the detective held the document committing Montgomery to the Tombs to await an investigation of the charge against him and an indictment by the grand jury.

Within a half-hour from the time he stepped up on the bridge, with his protest of innocence ready on his lips, James Montgomery was in a cell in Murderers' Row in the Tombs.

### CHAPTER III

**M**ICHAEL KEARNEY was one of the star plain-clothes men of New York. He had little imagination and the psychological theories of Münsterberg and Lombroso did not interest him. He had heard that there were such writers on criminology but he had never read anything they had written, and if he had tried to read their works he would not have been able to comprehend them because of their scholarship. His life was given to dealing with the raw stuff, the actual criminal and the actual crime. He never shaped a theory; the district attorney and his assistants could indulge in that after he had turned in the evidence.

Kearney "went on the cops," as the department slang has it, when he was twenty-three years old. He had done two years' work at the polls in his election precinct and his father before him had been a Tammany man. He was among the humble but nevertheless efficient and necessary



toilers in the great political machine which for so many years has controlled the government of New York. His appointment to the force was his reward for political chores done in a manner satisfactory to his precinct captain and the assembly district leader.

In the police school Kearney was taught how to heel a crook, how to strangle an assailant, how to suddenly shoot upward the heavy base of his big right hand to the chin of a foe from the underworld and shock his brain with the jolt, how to twist an arm so that agony would subdue an obstreperous prisoner, and how to pick up from the street and heave to his shoulders a corpse twice his own weight. These essentials he worked out with dogged application and terrific sweat on the wrestling mats in the training room.

Kearney was taught how to swing the butt of a revolver, keeping the right index finger inside of the guard so that with a twist the weapon could be turned instantly into position for firing. His instructors transmitted to him every trick in brutal contest with the same care that the mother of pit dogs teaches her whelps the holds for limb and throat.

After this kindergarten training, Kearney went to the identification school, where he was taught the art of keeping a fellow human branded with his guilt until the day of his death. At a little desk of the same style of construction that is used in the public schools, he sat for days, listening keenly to lectures and watching his instructor draw on the blackboard human profiles and sketches of ears and noses. Here he developed the power of observation and also strengthened his memory.

Having learned to "spot," or pick out, a criminal, Kearney was sent to the streets with a senior in point of service who taught him to "shadow." Identification, pursuit, detection and prosecution were acquired by hard work and conscientious attention to the tasks put before him. He became a man with a camera eye and one with but a single joy in life — the chase!

As Kearney advanced in his profession, he became known as a detective who never stopped on a trail until he had caught up with the quarry. After five years he was made a first grade lieutenant at headquarters; he had become a silent, almost sullen, man, looked up to by those under him and feared by those over him, who drew

larger salaries but who had less capacity as man-hunters.

If any of the sense of humor had come to him with his Irish blood, Kearney lost it in early youth with other boyish pleasures. The bright, laughing side of life was not for him. There is plenty of strong jest and grim comedy in the underworld, but there was no fun in Mike Kearney and consequently he did not appreciate any grade or quality of mirth.

But Kearney had one pleasure in life, and it was so satisfying to him that his homely, clean-shaven face would break into a smile at the mere thought of it. This pleasure was his home. It was not the home of the average man of thirty years, with a contented wife and growing children, but it was good enough for Kearney, for his old mother kept it spotlessly clean and snug for him, and therein she worshiped her only son. In a comfortable little flat in the lower East Side mother and son lived. She was all the world to him and he was the apple of her eye.

The day before the trial of James Montgomery for murder, Kearney started home after a long conference with a young assistant district attor-

ney who had been given the case for prosecution. They had gone over the evidence together carefully and both had agreed, with considerable satisfaction, that the jury would surely bring in a verdict of murder in the second degree if it failed to bring in a first degree verdict entailing death in the chair.

Counsel had been appointed by a justice in the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court, as Montgomery was friendless and penniless. An effort had been made to have this lawyer plead guilty to manslaughter for the defendant. The docket was heavy and time and expense would be saved. For thus helping out the county, Montgomery would be repaid with a sentence of fifteen or twenty years. But the boy's counsel reported that his client insisted on his innocence and refused to plead guilty to any degree of crime.

Mike Kearney was satisfied. His evidence was all in shape. He left the cracked, dirty, Criminal Courts building on Centre Street and threaded his way into the lower East Side. On Oliver Street, close to the old Cherry Hill section, he came to a three-story brick building that had been a fine residence in the days when Canal

Street was the city's northern boundary. It had been made over into flats and his home was on the top floor. As he approached the house, he saw the gray head of his mother at a front window, where she was watching and waiting for him. He shouted up to ask whether she wanted him to run any errand before dinner. She shook her head and withdrew it as he entered the vestibule of the old-fashioned house.

At the head of the top flight of stairs his mother stood waiting for him. She kissed him and with a hand on his arm escorted him into the kitchen of the flat. She pulled a chair up to the kitchen table and hung up his hat and coat.

The room was spotless and had a wholesome, homely aspect. On the brightly polished range a kettle was singing. The floor was bare, save for an oilcloth mat before the stove, but the boards were as white as if they had been rubbed with pumice after much soaping and scrubbing. From the edge of a long shelf swung long-handled spoons and forks, pots and pans, and other implements essential to the happiness of a home-loving and industrious woman.

The only picture on the kitchen walls — and

the kitchen was also the dining-room for mother and son — was that of the Saviour. His benign countenance looked with a tender and compassionate smile upon the rather portly, bustling old mother and the son who loved her and only her of all the people of the world.

At the two open windows a gentle breeze of the autumn evening made crispy, scrim curtains rise, flutter and fall. Kearney tilted his chair back against the wall and sighed his content as he sat in his shirt sleeves and glanced about the room. He had as yet said nothing.

Mrs. Kearney went to a window opening on the fire-escape and reached into a box.

"I have a surprise f'r me darlin' boy," she said, hiding something behind her ample apron and smiling with love and pride upon her son.

He smiled back to her with an inquiring arch of his sandy eyebrows.

"I'm getting ixtravagant in me old age, Mike," she told him, with a little laugh of content and happiness. "But as me boy is a first grade lieutenant and will soon be after getting in the grade of captain, I thought I would order this."

She held up a brown bottle of beer of better

quality than they had been accustomed to afford in past years.

"I tried it meself, Mike," she went on. "It was after I'd finished the washin' an' it was grand. Shall I open it f'r ye?"

He nodded.

"Ye're that solemn, Mike," she protested, as she removed the tin top from the bottle, "that ye'd give a good fairy th' blues. What's ailin' ye, lad?"

"Nuthin," he replied, as he took the bottle and swigged it from the neck. Getting his breath after a deep potation, he added: "I gotta case on to-morrow and I don't want to make a slip-up."

"A big case?" she asked.

"No, but it's murder."

"Murder!" she echoed, with awe in her voice.

"The Montgomery case I told ye about."

"O, an' he's only a broth of a boy!"

"Crooks start young."

He returned to his beer as she spread a clean cloth and placed knives, forks and plates for two on the table.

The dusk came and the deep shadow of a tene-

ment in the rear of the little, old-fashioned house crept to the scrim curtains and darkened them. Kearney closed the windows and lighted the gas-jet over the center of the room.

The mother placed bread and butter, boiled beef, potatoes and cabbage on the table and they sat down for their evening meal. Mrs. Kearney made the sign of the cross. And her son, from long habit, bowed his head and touched his breast in three places.

They were eating in silence when the electric bell beside the kitchen door tingled feebly.

"Who's that, I wonder?" asked Kearney, reaching behind him and pressing the button which would open the street entrance. They had resumed their meal when there came a light tap at the door.

"Come in," called Mrs. Kearney.

The door opened. The light overhead flooded the frail figure of a woman in black. She was old and a little bit of a creature, with the frame of a mere child. Her clothes were of poor quality but were wonderfully neat and tidy. She wore an old-fashioned bonnet trimmed with stiff, white ruching. Her hands were ungloved and they





“What can I do for you, ma’am?” asked Kearney, half turning from his plate.

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showed small and thin and heavily veined. Her face was very pale and in her faded eyes was a light of dreadful anxiety.

"Does Mr. Kearney live here?" she asked very softly.

"Yes; I'm Kearney," replied the detective.

"Come in, ma'am, won't ye, and have a seat?" asked Mrs. Kearney, leaving her chair and going to the visitor.

The little old woman entered and sat on the edge of a chair offered her.

"What can I do for you, ma'am?" asked Kearney, half turning from his plate.

"You can do everything for me, sir," she replied, with a quaver in the sound of every word. "I've come for my boy Jim — Jim Montgomery. He's in trouble. I just heard of it through the papers."

A wave of pity flooded the heart of Mrs. Kearney as she looked from the pathetic little mother to her big-boned, stolid son.

Kearney's jaw dropped and the knife and fork fell from his hands. He turned cautiously and took a sly look at the face of the mother of his quarry. He saw that she was a woman of refine-

ment and not of the vigorous, assertive, independent, motherly type of the East Side. Her dress and her comportment told him that she had come from the country.

“I would have been here sooner,” she explained, “but I live on the other side of the Hudson, you see, near Nyack, and I did not know what had happened. I thought my Jim was hunting a job in the city, and when I did not hear from him I went into the village to ask the advice of some of the friends of my husband, who is dead these many years. I then heard of my boy’s arrest.”

A little spray of jet beads topping her bonnet trembled violently and flashed in the light of the gas above. After a moment she regained control of her emotions.

“Why didn’t yuh go to see his lawyer?” asked Kearney.

“I went to the Tombs prison,” she told him, “and they said that it was too late for me to see my son. They did not know the name of his lawyer but one of the keepers felt sorry for me and told me that you knew all about the case. He got your address for me.”

Kearney cursed the prison deputy for a fool as he pondered what to say next.

"You ain't got any right to be here on this case," he said finally and with irritation in his voice. "And I ain't got any right to be talking with you about it. I'm a witness for the prosecution. You must wait and see your son's lawyer in the morning."

Mrs. Kearney began clearing away the dishes.

"He's innocent, sir," the frail visitor pleaded eagerly. "He has been my support since he was a boy of fourteen and a better son no woman ever had. He knows nothing about crime, Mr. Kearney. He's just a country boy. His father was a good man before him, and I brought him up in the fear of God. You've got a good mother, sir, and you c-c-c-an —"

Her voice trailed off to nothingness. The tears came silently from the faded, anxious eyes and the heavily-veined little hands hid the white face.

"What can I do, ma'am?" demanded Kearney sharply. "I'm the chief witness for the prosecution. I gotta do my duty, hard as it may be. The law tells me what I gotta do and I must do it.

If you got witnesses, bring 'em to court in the morning."

"I have several friends in Nyack who will testify that my boy is a good boy," she sobbed. "They promised to come to the court-house to-morrow."

Kearney looked at his watch, pushed back his chair, and reached for his hat and coat.

"That's all I can tell you, lady," he said, as he departed abruptly.

Mrs. Montgomery called after him in a thin, frightened voice, but if he heard he did not reply.

She started up from her chair to leave, but her strength gave out and she sank back, sobbing bitterly.

Kearney's mother brought her a cup of tea and solaced her as best she could, the tears flowing from her own eyes.

## CHAPTER IV

**E**UGENE GARRETT, a lawyer of insignificant attainment at the bar but with a certain degree of political influence in his assembly district, was the man chosen by the court to defend Montgomery. The fee he would receive from the public treasury was a part of his reward for his practical Democratic industry in and out of season.

He was by no means a trial lawyer, but he had attained success so far as the gathering of money counts for success in life. His ruddy, heavy features always bore a smile, the corners of his lips having become fixed from constantly assumed geniality. His gait was of affected importance and his attire was worn about a huge blue-white diamond rivetted in the center of a striped shirt.

Garrett welcomed the arrival of the mother of his client and with the voice of a dove assured the frightened little countrywoman that he

would move heaven and earth to free her son. He inquired very gently as to her probability of securing funds for taking the case to the higher courts on appeal, should a verdict against him be reached by the jury.

Aside from the prospect of getting a fee from her as well as from the court, the lawyer took a genuine professional interest in the mother of the defendant. He would use her to work on the sympathies of the jury. She brought to the Criminal Courts building three men and a woman, old friends from the country about the town of Nyack. All would be willing character witnesses for the accused.

They entered the court room with the assistant district attorney, his witnesses and a flock of men drawn as veniremen. They were hardly seated when the door of the chambers of the presiding justice was opened by a court attendant and a heavy, drowsy man in a black silk gown strode across the room and made his way laboriously and with much panting to the dais before a mural painting of Justice, flanked by another of the three Fates. Every one in the court-room rose from his seat and remained



standing until the justice was seated. The justice arranged the folds of his gown, took his seat, and stared with deep reflection at a sheet of perfectly blank paper before him, occasionally heightening his pose of dignity and importance by making curlicues on the paper with pen and ink.

A jury was quickly secured from the panel, and twelve men who had declared that they were not opposed to capital punishment, that they had not read the newspapers, that they had no opinions whatever and were perfectly competent to give Montgomery a fair trial and order his life snuffed out, took their seats in the jury-box.

Had Garrett possessed the astuteness and the eloquence of a Bourke Cockran or a Jerome, he might have hoped to interest the little group of listless and shabby men in the jury-box. But juries on criminal cases in New York are chosen from the city's ample supply of mediocrity, and in consequence suffer a sense of affliction when they behold it in others. Brilliancy, though it may only flash in the pan, stirs their sluggish minds, and the reward for the brilliant is rapt attention, knowing and appreciative smiles and favorable verdicts.

Then, too, juries on New York's criminal cases, for the most part, have long grown accustomed to the guidance of the press. Although they may not read the newspapers and may be sincere in declaring that if they have read them they have not formed an opinion that would prevent their giving a fair trial, they learn in some strange manner that the papers are lifting them from obscurity by printing their pictures and their names, and they revel in the importance of their well advertised performance of civic duty.

The annals of New York's courts are packed with cases where hysterical editorials, articles of "human interest" by special men and women writers, forcing sympathy for murderers and murderesses, have brought about acquittals. It is a proud and eventful moment in the life of a New York juror when the shriek from the press is answered by his verdict of "Not Guilty" and the acquitted prisoner rushes to the jury-box to wring his flaccid hand.

But in the case of the People — or the Police — against James Montgomery there was no outcry for mercy. There was not enough of sordidness in the crime to give the public a real thrill. He

was not of the real murderer's type, the kind that slays for selfishness or hate. He was not a minister of the gospel nor was he the dissolute son of a Pittsburgh millionaire. His case was devoid of all the elements that make murder fascinating to those newspaper readers who take murder-trial reports as a part of their intellectual pabulum.

The watchman of the bank in the West Side had been cracked over the head with an iron instrument. His end was as prosaic as had been his birth and life.

There was no crowd in the court-room as Garrett rose and announced that the defense was ready for trial.

Montgomery sat with his mother on his left and his counsel on his right. The little band of plain people who had journeyed from the country to help the widow's son sat on the first bench behind the railing which marked off the space for counsel and clients.

The young assistant district attorney was flanked on the right by Kearney, who was there to see that the club of the police system descended fairly and squarely and with every pound and ounce of force the written law allowed.

The policeman who had caught the prisoner running away from the scene of the murder with a kit of tools sat on the left of the prosecuting attorney. Three other witnesses sat near them. They were to testify that on the night of the murder they had seen the prisoner lurking in the Hell's Kitchen section of the city on the North River front. One of these was a stool pigeon of long service to the detective bureau, a man hired to betray fellow criminals and one whose own crimes were overlooked because of his usefulness.

There was one other witness, a man who combined a knowledge of bacteriology and chemistry with a knowledge of the science developed by Bertillon — anthropometry. Garrett looked at him curiously and wondered what part he would play in the case. The police had not produced this witness until the trial was begun. It was an old police trick, as old as the trick played by Daniel when he cleared Susanna and inaugurated the practice of separating witnesses.

The indictment charging murder was read and the prisoner pleaded not guilty.

Where it required three months to bring about a mistrial for the murderous young millionaire

from Pittsburgh in this same vilely kept building, with its horde of idling political appointees, it required only three hours to dispose of the case of this pale country boy facing a hurried and impatient judge and a sleepy jury.

In those three hours Kearney, the man from headquarters, had his witnesses present the case for the State. The three men from Hell's Kitchen told of seeing the prisoner lurking in that neighborhood. He was in the company of two yeggmen. The policeman who arrested him told of his attempted escape after the vault of the bank was blown with nitroglycerine.

Garrett then learned why the expert was brought into the case.

The expert qualified as such in a brief direct examination. He identified a heavy, iron wrench handed him by the prosecutor as one of the tools found in the kit taken from the prisoner.

"You made a careful examination of this implement, did you not?" asked the assistant district attorney.

"I did."

"Tell the jury what you found there."

"I found a spot about two inches long by a half inch wide and by laboratory tests found it to be a spot of human blood."

"What else did you find?"

"I dusted the wrench with a white powder and found the prints of a thumb and two fingers."

The prosecuting attorney placed the wrench in evidence as Exhibit A and then offered as Exhibit B an enlarged photograph of the prints found upon it.

"I offer you for identification this document, which is the Bertillon record of the accused taken at police headquarters following his arrest," said the prosecutor.

The expert examined it.

"What do you find in this record that bears upon the case before us?"

"The thumb print and the prints of the index and middle fingers of the right hand in this record are the same prints shown upon the wrench with the spot of blood."

"That is all," said the prosecutor, with a smile and an air of triumph.

He was young and eager for a record of convictions. He looked significantly toward the

jurors as if to say: "It is now up to you, gentlemen, to send the prisoner to the chair."

This trump card of the police brought to James Montgomery a realization of the utter hopelessness of his plight, and his face became a chalky white. Death in the electric chair was before him. He was but a boy and his patient, old mother was sitting beside him, her hand clasping his.

Fortunately she could not comprehend what was going on. She had never heard of the Bertillon system. She had no realization of the fact that the police had proved in court that there were indisputable marks of her boy's hand upon the weapon which had felled the bank watchman. A childlike faith in God and a whole and perfect trust in Him held her up during the ordeal.

Montgomery choked back the sobs of despair that kept rising in his throat and returned the pressure of his mother's hand.

The witnesses for the defense were put on in quick order. They told in homely language what they knew of the accused. He had been a faithful son and the support of his mother. He was working as an apprentice machinist in a factory

in Nyack when hard times caused the factory to close. Work was scarce and he had left home to seek employment in the city.

The mother took the stand. She turned in the chair and looked to the judge appealingly, as a wounded bird would look up to the bough from which it had fallen.

"Face the jury," the judge instructed her.

She looked at the twelve men to her left and beheld them staring at her as blankly as if she had been a piece of misplaced furniture.

"Just tell the jury about your boy," said Garrett, standing and twirling a heavy gold watch-charm.

"My son was born in the cottage in which I now live near Nyack —" she began.

"You must speak louder," the judge instructed.

"I can't hear a word she says," testily exclaimed the prosecutor, "and I doubt if Juror Number 12 can even hear the sound of her voice."

She started again but her voice was very faint, and Juror Number 12 shook his head to signify that he could not hear.

"Raise your voice and face the jury," said the court; "don't turn toward me."

Garrett asked that she be given a glass of



water and a court attendant hurriedly supplied it.

She finally raised her voice and told her story. The mother-love sung in every word she uttered; it glistened with the soft light of holy candles in her faded eyes, and it fairly trembled forth from her fragile body as she told of the life of her only child and of their mutual struggle.

"It is not in the nature of my son to harm any one," she started to say, as her story drew to a close. The young prosecutor popped from his chair as if a powerful spring had been released beneath him.

"I object," he cried wrathfully. "I ask the court to have that remark stricken out as irrelevant, incompetent and immaterial. It is not evidence."

"Strike it out, Mr. Stenographer," said the court, with a yawn.

"No mother ever had a nobler or better son," resumed the witness, the little spray of jet in her bonnet trembling violently. "I know that he is innocent, as innocent as I am of this —"

The prosecutor was again on his feet and fairly shrieking his wrath and indignation. His sense

of justice and fairness was bitterly outraged. The rules of evidence formulated in every court in the land prohibited expressions of mere opinion by a witness unless the witness had qualified as an expert.

When he recovered sufficient composure to speak with coherence, he asked the court to instruct the jury to disregard the comments of the witness and to warn her against repetition of the offense.

“Gentlemen of the jury,” said the court, after rapping with his gavel, “you are instructed to pay no attention to the remarks just made by the witness. They are not in the nature of evidence and they are ordered stricken from the records.”

Mrs. Montgomery, during this colloquy, sat twisting her fingers together and looking from judge to jury and from jury to judge as if in the hope that some one would direct her and help her.

Being only the mother of the prisoner, her frail body having brought him into the world, her opinion of him had no value in court. There was no place in the trial for an account of maternal trust and love. Garrett took her from the stand,

the prosecuting attorney declining, with an air of scorn, to cross-examine her.

The prisoner was then sworn. He had spent nearly a month in the Tombs, waiting trial, and the prison pallor, the ghastly yellow tinge that would make a saint look like a convict, was upon him. The spectacle of his little mother on the stand had shaken his nerve, and his hand trembled as he took the Bible and made his oath.

Montgomery stammered his story, often repeated himself, made mistakes and corrected them. He was hopelessly rattled. Several of the jurors smiled knowingly as if accepting him as a poor liar. His story was simple enough despite the havoc wrought with it.

When the factory closed, he left Nyack and came to New York, bringing his kit of tools with him. He had never heard of the Hell's Kitchen section and was asking work along Tenth and Eleventh Avenues because factories were located there. He met a man who seemed to take an interest in him. This man introduced him to another and they bought him his supper at a restaurant near the river. They told him that they could get him work but he would have to

work at night. They looked over his kit of tools and one of them admired a steel drill and said it was a fine one.

"After nightfall," Montgomery told the jury, "I went with the men a number of blocks east. One of them took my tools and bade me wait at a corner. I was beginning to suspect that something was wrong when I heard a dull explosion as if in a cellar. A minute after, one of the men passed me, running. He dropped the kit of tools and the wrench. My tools were all that stood between me and starvation. If they were lost I could not hope to get work at my trade. I grabbed up the wrench, threw it into the bag, and started to run away when I was arrested."

The cross-examination furnished the young prosecutor with excellent practice in those sophistries supposed to be necessary in the practice of law. The boy was as wax in the hands of the questioner before him. He tried to answer adroit questions he should not have answered, and his failure to answer satisfactorily deepened the impression that he was lying. After an hour of misery and bewilderment he was excused from the stand.

It was noon. At one o'clock court would recess for lunch. With a little expedition the case of the Police against James Montgomery could be ended in time to leave the afternoon clear. The court and counsel conferred in whispers. The arguments followed. They were brief. While the rules of evidence would not permit the mother of the prisoner to beg for his life and proclaim her belief in his innocence, they allowed the prosecutor in his address to the jury to paint him as a desperate young thief, crouching in the dark with a heavy iron wrench uplifted and quick to do murder for the sake of loot. He had full permission to paint him as Gog and Magog, as Baal, as any creature to be regarded with fear and revulsion.

The young man with a reputation to make was forensically inclined. He shouted, waved his arms, splashed on the black paint and sat down with a glow within as he told himself that he had done very nicely.

Garrett's address was short and weak. His vocabulary was that of the money-hungry lawyer who sits in a hole in the great city, shuffling bonds and mortgages through his fingers and

always nibbling away at the little hoardings of ignorant clients. His sense of humanity and his appreciation of the pity and horror of the whole drama in which he was participating were nil.

The judge's instructions to the jury were a string of empty words, mouthed hurriedly and tonelessly.

As the hands on the marble-faced clock in the court-room showed the hour of one, the jury was sent out to lunch with instructions to deliberate on a verdict immediately after the meal. The court system gave the jurors a full day's pay and the price of the lunch. They were satisfied. They would have full stomachs, full fee and a free afternoon.

At two o'clock the twelve men, with twelve toothpicks conspicuously displayed, filed into the jury room and took one ballot only to decide the fate of the prisoner.

The case was entirely circumstantial. There was one way to avoid the risk of sending an innocent man to his death in the electric chair. They took it.

In court once more, the clerk ordered the

prisoner to stand and face the jury and the jury to look upon the prisoner.

"Gentlemen, have you reached a verdict?" asked the clerk.

"We have," replied the foreman.

"What is your verdict?"

The foreman pulled a slip of paper from his pocket and read:

"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty of murder in the second degree."

## CHAPTER V

**T**HE country people who had journeyed to the metropolis to do what little they could for the widow's son took Mrs. Montgomery back with them. What little brightness of hope had been within her during the trial of her boy vanished with his conviction.

She had tried, the day after the trial, to reach the judge and appeal to him for mercy and a light sentence, but the importunings of widows, wives and children are avoided by the judiciary as much as possible. The legal representative of a great banking institution or some mighty estate or corporation has the open sesame to the chambers of the men wearing the ermine, but there is not such a great number of these and the poor are a mighty multitude.

The meek and the humble are referred to the written and legally canonical opinions of Mr. Justice Brown, Mr. Justice Black and Mr. Justice Green. There is but little if any room in a court



of justice for the old belief taught by the prophets and by the Young Man out of Nazareth, that the mercy of God endures forever. Penalties are explicit. The judge must sentence because the makers of the statutes have decided that such and such is a crime, and that such and such is the penalty for the crime, and these makers of law are legislators, the bribery and exposure of whom are every-day occurrences.

At every turn the mother of James Montgomery met with an obstacle. She had no "Big Mike" This or "Little Mike" That, with political power enough to make a judge tremble, back of her. The judge before whom her son was convicted was hedged about by retainers, coarse, blue-nosed, officious clerks, bailiffs and other attachés appointed to well-paying jobs from various assembly districts.

She had no money with which to allay the itching of the palms of petty grafters who would sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes, as they have been doing since Isaiah's time. To such guardians of the privacy and the sanctity of the administrators of the law, Mrs. Montgomery was but one of many annoying

people trying to influence the court with her tears and her sorrows.

At last she turned away and suffered herself to be taken back to the little cottage out in the country. A month before she had been a sprightly old lady, quick of step, delighted with every household task, and always finding her reward in the pride that a mother takes in a good son. But in the city she had found the waters of Marah and the city's system had forced her down, down, down to drink of them.

Her little, old limbs became heavy, her tiny face whiter than the untouched scroll of Judgment before sin and sorrow had ever come under heaven, and her heart, her good, gentle, tender, compassionate heart, was turned to lead.

A week after her departure her son was taken from his cell in the Tombs and over the Bridge of Sighs to the Criminal Courts building to be sentenced.

The boy stood up when the clerk bade him. He heard the question asked whether there was any reason why the penalty of the law should not be exacted from him. He could think of nothing to say save: "I am innocent."

The formula of sentence was mumbled by the judge and an officer took him by the arm and led him away.

As they reached the bridge over Franklin Street, connecting the Tombs and the court building, and the sunlight from the square windows struck upon them for a moment, Montgomery asked his keeper:

"How many years did he say? I could not hear him."

The officer looked at him uneasily and hesitated.

"Is it against the rules to tell me?" asked the boy.

"No."

"What was the sentence?"

"Life imprisonment."

Montgomery staggered and the officer released his grip and caught him under the arms, thinking that he would faint.

There was a sob, hard and bitter, and then the young man cried as a child would cry when an ugly tempered servant took from the nursery floor its toys newly given.

The sentence of the court had swept from him

the toys of young manhood and had cast them as grass into the furnace. He would never hear the sound of a woman's voice, nor the sound of laughter by man or child. He would never again see the magic line where sky and sea or woodlands meet. Even the seasons of the year were taken from him. The beauties of nature familiar to the eyes of a wholesome country boy, the spread of smiling fields, tasseled corn waving in the wind, bending roads, glimpses of the sunlit river through foliage, quiet little gardens in front of quiet little houses, were all taken from him as if the tail of a comet loaded with cyanogen had swept the earth and had wiped out all the loveliness that God had fashioned for His children.

Within the walls of Sing Sing prison the chirp of some brave and friendly sparrow might catch his ear, perhaps, but the music of the brook and the wind in the trees, the hum and thrum of insects on autumn nights, the calls and songs of robin, thrush and lark and the low, lovestrung voice of his patient mother would never be his again. Silence and gray walls and work until death were his.

As the sentenced prisoners were being taken

from the Tombs for the journeys to the State's various prisons, Detective Lieutenant Michael Kearney sat in the office of his inspector and received his congratulations for his excellent work in the Montgomery case.

The inspector was gratified. A life sentence was better than a death sentence, for yeggmen do not fear death and it is only the dread of long prison terms that serves their profession as a deterrent. In so far as the care and preservation of human society went, Montgomery was better off buried alive than buried dead. Other yeggs would think a second time before braining a bank watchman or manhandling a cop.

Inspector Ranscombe looked over his list of assignments for the day and found nothing worth the time and skill of his favorite manhunter.

"You have a day off, Mike," he told the detective.

Kearney did not relish this and craned his neck to scan the list of assignments.

"Nothing doing," laughed his chief. "You've just got to take a day off."

Kearney rose, saluted and left headquarters. A man absolutely unappreciative of the ordinary

pleasures of life, he found himself at a loss what to do. He walked north to Fourteenth Street and loitered in that crowded, tawdry highway between Broadway and Third Avenue. He read the flamboyant bills announcing the attractions of cheap theatres and picture shows but he entered none of them. He found the crowds outside more interesting and he kept his keen, little eyes on the alert for a pickpocket or some other law-breaker.

He had no unfinished case on his hands. All of his men were either in prison serving their terms or in the Tombs waiting trial.

He thought of taking the subway to Grand Central Station and ambushing a crook or two in the crowds there, but second thought made him decide that the plain-clothes men on duty there would resent his intrusion. He abandoned this rather promising process of recreation.

There was only one thing worth while after all on a day off: his little flat in Oliver Street. He took a Third Avenue Elevated train to Chatham Square and made his way home. He rang the bell in the vestibule. The lock clicked and he entered.

Kearney mounted the stairs and opened his mother's kitchen door without knocking.

"Well, Mike!" exclaimed Mrs. Kearney in surprise. "What brings you home at this time of day?"

"Say, old lady," he replied warningly, "you want to be careful about leaving this kitchen door unlocked and answering every ring of the bell. Some day a couple of daylight guys will come along, tap you on the bean and clean out the place. You get me?"

"The good Lord looks out f'r your mither, Mike," she replied, "but ye didn' answer me question, lad."

"I gotta day off," he told her. "Ye're scrubbing the kitchen flure again. When'll you be done?"

"Pretty soon, Mike. You go in the parlor and make yourself comfortable and I'll bring the beer and your pipe."

He did as she bade him and she followed, clearing off a center table and placing his beer, pipe and tobacco on it.

He tried several chairs. They were all stiffly tufted — bought for "company." He could

adjust himself to none of them comfortably. He drank his beer and looked about the room reflectively.

Various gewgaws stuck on the mantel, the heavily framed carbon portraits of his father and mother, one of himself when he was a dour boy of fifteen, the spindle legs of the center table and the violently red roses in the carpet were not to his liking. He returned to the kitchen.

“Could ye spread down some bagging so I can stay in here?” he asked.

“Sure, lad,” she replied from her knees. “I’m finished now.”

She made him comfortable in his old chair by the window. He was engaged in balancing himself at his favorite angle when he noticed something black on the end of the kitchen table.

“What’s that, old lady?” he asked curiously.

The mother’s face paled.

He reached over and picked it up. It was a filmy and torn veil. Beneath it was a little black fan.

“She forgot them — Mrs. Montgomery,” explained the mother, taking the two articles from the hand of her son. “The poor, little woman; the poor, little woman!”



She hurried with them to her bedroom, which opened on the kitchen. When she returned and began shaking down the ashes in the stove, she sighed.

"It's terrible, Mike," she said. "The poor, old mither is left out in the world to starve or die of a broken heart. Blessed Mother in Heaven look after her."

Some of the cosiness of the room seemed to leave it. Was there chill in the air or did he just imagine it? He closed the window back of him.

"The evidence was all one way," he grunted. "I didn't try him. I wasn't the judge or the jury. I didn't decide whether he was guilty or innocent. That ain't my job. My job is to get the evidence for the prosecution. He had a lawyer, didn't he?"

Anger had crept into his voice.

Mrs. Kearney, flustered, busied herself further with the stove.

"All I said, Mike, was that I was sorry for the poor lad's mither," she protested. "He is worse than dead to her, f'r if he was dead she could go to his grave of a Sunday."

He resorted to his beer bottle.

The sun that had burst through the clouds a few moments before once again disappeared and the crisp scrim curtains darkened. The rain began to fall and slap against the windowpanes. The bright fire in the stove made the room warm, but Mike Kearney did not feel at ease. The wind rose and began to skirl in the eaves of the old-fashioned Oliver Street house.

He tried to think of something to say that would turn the conversation to some more agreeable subject, but he was a one-idea man and there was no fancy in him.

From the open door of his mother's bedroom came a soft, ruffling sound.

It startled him.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"It's that devil of a kitten, Mickey," she told him.

As if in answer for himself, Mrs. Kearney's mouser rolled into the kitchen, slapping and playing with a black object, the mourning fan of Mrs. Montgomery.

Kearney left his chair and went to a closet, taking down a rusty felt hat and a raincoat.

"I think I'll walk around to th' Oak Street station f'r a bit of gossip," he said.

"But I'll be gettin' lunch f'r ye pretty soon, Mike," she protested.

"Naw, I guess I'll eat out f'r a change." With a grunt of good-by he left the flat

Mrs. Kearney went out into the corridor and listened fondly to his last footfall on the stairs. When the door below slammed behind him, she went to her bedroom, found a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles, and sat down at a kitchen window to read from her "Key of Heaven."

## CHAPTER VI

OF the men sentenced with James Montgomery, six were sent to Sing Sing, while the others went to Clinton and Auburn.

The six Sing Sing men were manacled in couples, but as Montgomery was a "lifer," additional precaution against attempted escape was taken by handcuffing him to a guard as well as to his prison mate. There were three links in the chain of humanity and steel.

Montgomery found that the prisoner locked to his right wrist was the heavy, long-armed man with the prognathous jaw who had sworn so heartily and bitterly the morning of the line-up at police headquarters.

The six men and their guards piled into an automobile van in front of the Tombs on Centre Street. Above the clanging of the gong of the machine and the heavy roar of vehicular traffic as they were taken toward Grand Central Station, Montgomery could hear the man beside him

keeping up a low growl, as of a beast dreaming of battle.

The poor lad who had been felled by the lion's paw reaching from Mulberry Street accepted these mutterings as a protest against society. Terrible as was his fate, he was too young and fresh to know aught about ranting and cursing. But in his heart he felt as if he could say "Aye" to the bitter outpourings of the savage companion linked to him. Had he known the length of this man's sentence he might have envied him, for he was to serve only fifteen years. His offense was burglary.

They boarded a train for Ossining at Grand Central Station. The guards turned seats in the smoking-car so that they could face their prisoners. The man in charge of Montgomery slipped his steel leash for the journey and sat opposite him and the fifteen-year man.

At Tarrytown, where the electric zone ended, the train was delayed while an engine was coupled to the coaches. Here the tracks run on the very edge of the Hudson, the river splashing the ties during high winds from the west.

Across the river Montgomery could see a

pretty cluster of houses half hidden in the trees. It was the village of Nyack. Just over the skyline and beyond the last peaked roof, was a cottage standing back from the broad automobile road which leads to Tuxedo. Within that cottage was the little mother with the faded eyes and the heart that had turned to lead in the Criminal Courts building in New York. His eyes peered hungrily through the coach window. He had written to her from the Tombs. It was a brave letter of determination to some day prove to the world that he was innocent of the crime of which he had been convicted. He advised her to cast about for a boarder, so that she could keep the taxes paid on the home. His father had been a Mason in good standing and the Masons had helped her before. They would help their dead brother's widow again, he told her. As he gazed toward the pleasant, distant country where his mother lived, he thought over this letter and prayed that some word in it might give her courage to fight through her natural span of life. The cursing of the burglar beside him died down and was finally replaced by heavy breathing which told that he slumbered.

The coaches clacked together and shivered as the locomotive coupled up.

The boy pressed his forehead against the window-pane and feasted his eyes for the last time on the heavily wooded further shore, the hill-bent horizon, the masses of clouds and patches of blue heaven, the rippling expanse of water, silver-crested by a stiff breeze from the southwest, the faint red tops of cottage chimneys and the tapering spires of country churches, the flash of white sails, and the foaming wake of the ferry between the opposite towns.

One of the strongest swimmers among the sturdy country boys about Nyack, he had swum the river, a good three and a half miles, more than once, and this scene in all its simple loveliness was old and sweetly old to his young eyes.

The day held the moods of a petulant and pretty woman. Patches of shadow chased patches of sunshine over the hills and across the bosom of the Hudson, strangely streaking the river with bright, dancing wave-crests and grotesque and almost baleful ribbons of mourning.

The train paused at Scarborough and was off again in less than a minute. Suddenly the eyes

of the boy at the window encountered total darkness and to his ears came the din of a railroad tunnel.

The burglar beside him awoke and began to mutter again. Having relieved himself of sufficient hate, he tugged at the wrist to which his own was chained and, in the darkness, said: "We're here."

The short tunnel was, in fact, directly under the entrance to Sing Sing prison. In a few seconds the train cleared the tunnel and stopped at Ossining station.

A covered tumbril was ready to take them up the steep road from the station to the highway running south and to the prison. The team of horses struggled upward, straining and panting, and, reaching the highway, stopped to blow. The convicted men had a few more precious moments in which they could feast their eyes with glimpses of sky, river and hills through the open front and rear of the vehicle.

The road they were on was the main artery of travel through the Cabbage Patch of the prison town. It was lined with tumbledown cottages occupied by negroes and foreigners.



But as battered and as leaky as was the worst of the shanties, there was a tiny flower garden, a patch of growing vegetables, sometimes a chicken yard, and always children and the wide arch of sky overhead for each.

At the end of the road loomed a barracklike building of gray stone, fast blackening with the years. It was the first of the prison structures and about it ran a high and wide wall. At regular intervals upon this wall were little octagonal sentry houses and in each of these stood a man with a rifle. The building, rising high above the wall, had narrow slits in its sheer stone sides and these slits were criss-crossed with steel bars.

Within this structure a cell awaited Montgomery. It would be his resting place at night after the day's work in the shops of the walled city of silence, sorrow, sweat and celibacy. Of the outside world he would see only a patch of sky squared by the steel bars. He would be as the police thought a yeggman should be — buried alive.

The van stopped before the gray portals of the building and the six convicts were lined up at the curb. On either side of them, in front of the

administration building, stretched plots of well trimmed lawn, centered with beds of salvia and geraniums as crimson as the sins of those who had gone their way before.

The men lining the curb still held that pride which is inherent and imperishable in the higher order of animals, however evil may be their case. As the officer in charge of the guards and prisoners entered the building to deliver the commitment papers to the warden, they clustered close together, hiding the bright handcuffs even from those who understood their plight. They peered curiously into the shadowy depths of the wide-arched entrance as they waited.

The officer returned and the little column followed to the gateway south of the main entrance to the building. They entered and the gate closed upon them as they began to pay the penalty exacted by the law.

## CHAPTER VII

**J**AMES MONTGOMERY was stripped of his clothes and finally stripped of his name. Both were thrown away. He became Number 60,108.

He stood naked under the examination of the prison physician and was then placed under a shower bath and washed clean. Garments made by convicts were given him, ill-fitting underwear, heavy shoes and a dull gray suit of baggy trousers and almost shapeless jacket. He noticed that on the left sleeve of his coat there was a white disc. He was questioned by a deputy warden and replied that he could read and write and that he had been through the public school at Nyack. He told the deputy that he was an apprentice machinist. He was reported to the foreman of the machine shop as available material for his force.

Montgomery was struck by the quiet of the prison. There was no sound of voices. Con-

victs came and went or busied themselves in groups over prison tasks but they did not converse. He was informed that the rule of silence was strictly enforced and that he might talk only at the close of work and when he was in his cell. He was of a taciturn nature, but when he thought that the rule of silence would obtain through his whole lifetime, the thing became appalling. He had the privilege of a cell by himself or with a cellmate. For the sake of the human voice he would hear in the morning before work and at night after work, he asked to be allowed to share a cell.

The fifteen-year man made the same request and the old burglar and the country boy became cell companions.

They separated for the time being. Number 60,108 was sent to the machine shops and turned over to the convict foreman, who questioned him and tested him as to the value and use of many tools and who found him worthy and well qualified for a place on his staff. The burglar needed no examination of that sort. He had been through it all before. He was given the working tools of his craft and began cutting garments with

other prisoners, who gave him looks of recognition and signalled greetings with their fingers in the deaf and dumb code or clicked out telegraphic messages in the Morse with their scissors.

The midday meal in the mess hall was choked down by Montgomery with a mighty effort. His interest in machinery kept him from breaking down during the afternoon. After the evening meal, he was marched to his prison tier with a battalion of convicts and a guard showed him his cell. He found the fifteen-year man already there.

Every cell on the tier was a busy phonograph by this time, for the rule of silence was now suspended and the men could talk all they pleased in the cells or from cell to cell. When the chatter became a babel of sound, a guard warned those talking loudest and the roar would die down.

“Well, what you in for and for how long?”

The country boy turned to the questioning burglar. “I was convicted of murder. I am in for life.”

The burglar grunted and scanned the face of his cellmate closely.

“My name’s Bill — Bill Hawkins,” he said.

"I'm in for burglary. You're green. I'll put you next to things."

Bill was eager to talk and paused for a moment as if considering the line of conversation or monologue he would indulge in.

"You got the white disc," he began finally. "If you keep it, they'll let you have newspapers and eats and tobacco. It's the first term disc. Mine's red. This is my third trip. Second term men wear a blue disc. As soon as any one of us violates a regulation, off goes the disc, Kid, and you'll never win it back. Get that?"

Montgomery nodded.

The burglar sat on the edge of the lower bunk, crouching so that his head was free from the upper. Bill saw that the boy was interested and continued, moodily and reflectively.

"There was one guy kept the white disc for thirty years," he said. "He killed a man in Brooklyn and was in for life, just like you. He never broke a single rule all that time. Each year he got a white chevron and at the end of each five years a white star in place of the chevrons. He was a wonder. We called him 'The Saint' and 'Dago John.' Rugini and his gang

called him 'Il Santo' in their language. It's hard to keep the disc for a month, Kid, believe me. I tried it when I first come in. But the Saint he kept it thirty years. As he was in for life, he couldn't get no commutation and so one day a new prison superintendent asked him why he kept piling up all the good marks. He told the supe that he wanted to die outside and was hoping for mercy. He wasn't such a fool after all, for they turned him out in time and none of us saw his funeral."

Thirty years of perfect prison conduct so that he might die as a human being that God had created and not be wiped out as a number from a board! Montgomery was shocked and thrilled by the brief story.

Bill explained that after a year of perfect conduct he would be given a white chevron to add to the disc and it would entitle him to write a letter once every two weeks, and that once every month he might purchase little articles for his comfort.

"But you can't slip 'em along to any of your friends," he said. "If you do and they catch you, it is good night for the white disc and the

chevron and all the good marks that would count for a commutation man."

After four years of perfect conduct marked by the disc and four white chevrons, Bill explained, he would be allowed to receive visits from friends once a month, could write a letter once a week, could receive a box of cooked food every three months from home — if he had a home — and could take a newspaper and keep it for two days on a stretch.

For these instructions the boy thanked his cellmate simply.

"Don't call me Mister Hawkins," protested Bill. "Call me Bill. This ain't any place for the mister business."

Bill had gradually loosened his clothes as he talked. He was now ready to retire. Montgomery saw him lift his long, powerful arms and take hold upon the edge of the upper pallet. Without touching the lower one with his feet, he drew himself up and swung into bed with the agility and ease of an orang.

"Good night," he grunted from above.

Montgomery prepared to retire and when he was ready to creep under his blanket he knelt and



bowed his head. The cell lights had been turned out. Hearing no sound from below, Bill leaned over the edge of his pallet and peered into the checkered shadows made by the tier lights shining through their bars. He saw the boy in prayer and held his peace.

James Montgomery had started the long treadmill jaunt to the grave of a life convict. The gong awakened him in the morning and he fell in line outside with the men of his tier, to be counted and accounted for in the morning report of his tier warden. The morning meal was dispatched in silence, as prescribed by the rules, and he started work in the machine shops.

The careful training his old mother had given him stood him in good stead. Every task that came to his hand he did cleanly and quickly. He found that the dreaded rule of silence was an advantage. He had much to learn about machinery and could apply himself to getting this knowledge without distraction of any sort. His foreman found him efficient, steady in his work and willing. He promised to become one of the most useful men who ever worked in prison garb.

The weeks passed into months and the months

finally rounded out a year, and Number 60,108 had a white chevron sewed to his sleeve under the white disc.

During the first year he had been as much cut off from the outer world as if he had gone down to the bottom of the sea with the crew of a sunken submarine. Now he was given pencil and paper. He had earned the privilege of writing a letter. His heart hungered for a word from or about his mother.

Resting a pad of paper on his knee, he sat on the edge of his cot after the end of a year's work to write to her.

The task was a mighty one. The very beginning of the letter with the words, "Dear Mother" shook his whole nature. His hand trembled violently and his heart beat so fast that he felt weak and ill. A great sorrow enveloped him, so great that it left no room for bitterness or protest. Just the touch of her dear hand, just a glimpse of her dear, sweet face and the sound of one spoken word from her lips! Could any boon under heaven be as great?

The tears filled his eyes and fell upon the sheet of paper. He turned from the task. The stretch

of hopeless, barren years for both of them was before his mind's eye. He threw himself on his cot and sobbed.

His burglar cellmate moved about uneasily, not knowing what to say or do in the presence of such distress.

"Say, Kid," he said at last, "get a strangle hold on the job. Don't let it floor you. Don't be taking the count, old fellow. Gimme a chance and I'll write the letter for you, if you tell me how to spell the words right."

Montgomery felt the kindness and humanity in the offer. He pulled himself from the cot and turned to him. If the burglar did have the jaw, the brow and arms of a gorilla and if he was a menace to society, there was yet within him that element which makes even the worst of us at times partake of the divine in human existence.

"I'm all right now, Bill," said the boy. "Thank you. I just lost my nerve for a minute. I want to write my mother and I didn't know what to tell her."

"Tell her?" echoed Bill. "Why, there's lots to tell her. Tell her about the white disc you still got on your arm and about the white chevron.

Tell her you're the best boy in the Sunday-school and always know your lesson. Tell her that every time you get a white stripe there's something doing for a big, fine record and that after awhile they will let you out for being so good."

The suggestion was a worthy one. He would tell her all of this, as the practical sense of the old burglar had advised. He would tell her also of his advance in his craft, of the new tools he had learned to use, of the machinery he was already building and repairing, and of his plans for perfecting mechanical devices. He would draw a picture of inventions he had in mind and that he would have patented, of the fortune that he would make some day, and of the spending of that fortune to gain his liberty and prove his innocence.

"That's the stuff, Kid," exclaimed the delighted old burglar. "You're bound to put it over on them yet. You got brains. The warden will help you get your patent and there's plenty of lawyers in this place to draw up the applications. Before you know it you will have money rolling in on you and with money you can do anything in this world. You can buy political influence enough to get a pardon. Go to it, son,

and make the old lady think that you'll soon be out and be a rich man, too."

The boy started his letter again and wrote until the signal sent them to their cots with lights out.

In the morning Bill was ready with more suggestions.

"If I could stomach all these rules like you," he said, "I wouldn't serve half my term, believe me. Once they get to trusting you, they watch you less. You come and go like a trusty and then some day you'll see your chance for a getaway and off you go. And if you ever get a start, all you got to do is to beat it over the river to the West Shore tracks and hop a fast freight for the Hackensack meadows. You'd be as safe there as in a jungle. If the mosquitoes don't eat you alive, you can take your time and as soon as you get a coat and a pair of pants you're all right."

"You mean try to escape?" asked Montgomery.

"Sure," replied Bill. "Why not? You're in for life and they can't add nothing to your sentence."

"But the pardon?"

"You might have to wait fifty years," said Bill, "and what's the use of getting out then?"

You would starve to death. When the time comes, I'll lend you a hand, Kid. There'll be a way of slipping you a little money and getting clothes for you."

Montgomery felt a curious little thrill of pleasure at the suggestion.

The burglar was watching him closely and to his heavy features came a look of satisfaction as he realized that the boy had taken hold of the idea.

"There's lots of time, lots of time," he warned. "Don't be in any hurry. Just keep at your job, but all the time keep your eyes skinned for the chance. It will come some day, sure."

Into the solemn, brown eyes of the boy there came the sparkle of hope. Already he pictured himself far off in some distant country, starting life under another name. He would make a good living wherever machinery was used. He was already an expert mechanic and in a few years his inventive mind would develop and he might turn out improvements that might mean a fortune to him. With money he could secretly prosecute a search for the man who had killed the night watchman of the bank. His name would be

cleared and he could step in the open once again and live the life God had intended him to live.

"You're only a kid," said Bill, as they prepared to answer the mess call for breakfast. "Mind what I'm telling you. Take your time. You can afford to wait five years yet, if necessary."

"I'll be careful," whispered Montgomery.

## CHAPTER VIII

NUMBER 60,108 began to count the hours and days to the probable moment when he would receive an answer to his first letter from prison.

His home was hardly more than twelve miles away from Sing Sing but it was across the river and well out in the country. It would depend upon the rural system for its delivery. As it traveled on its way, he let his mind follow it with many tender and yet distressing thoughts of her who would receive it.

How had she stood the shock, the sorrow and the shame of his conviction? He knew that she fully believed in his innocence, but it was more than probable that in and about Nyack there were scores of people who would say that the vaunted Bertillon system could not lie and that the print of his finger on the blood-stained wrench was surely a stamp of his guilt.



There would be unkind people who would seek to avoid further acquaintance with the mother of a young man convicted of brutal murder for the sake of robbery. But there would be kind people also, such as had journeyed to the city to testify for him. With these conflicting thoughts he went about his work in the machine shop with constantly increasing nervousness and anxiety.

Two days passed and the looked-for letter came. It was delivered to him O. K.'d by the deputy in charge of the correspondence department. He studied the handwriting on the envelope. It was not in the old-fashioned script of his mother, and his hands shook as he drew forth the letter and unfolded it.

He glanced at the signature and read the name of Margaret Wadhams, a friend and neighbor of his mother. She wrote that his mother had been very ill and that her eyesight was failing rapidly. She could not see well enough to write and had asked Miss Wadhams to do the writing for her.

"She tells me to write you only a bright letter," wrote Miss Wadhams, "but I think it is my duty to tell you that your dear mother has broken very

rapidly and I believe that she has not many more days to live. Her heart was crushed by the blow that fell upon you and that was only intended for you, James. She is patient and prays constantly that some day your innocence will be established.

“Garrett, the New York lawyer who defended you, wrote to her and urged her to mortgage the house and raise enough money so that he could take an appeal to the higher courts. She was eager to do this, but I prevailed upon her to see Mr. Westervelt, the Nyack lawyer, first. Mr. Westervelt said that the lawyer was a robber of widows and the poor and that he would not let her get out of his hands until she had sold her very clothes. He took up the matter without a fee, like the kind man that he is, and said that it was utterly useless to take an appeal. He said that there was no chance of offsetting the evidence against you unless the real slayer of the watchman was found.”

Montgomery put down the letter with a feeling of great weariness. What hope he held had been nourished, warmed over and kept alive by day and by night because of his mother. He wanted

her to live until the red stain of a murder charge was taken from her name and from his. He did not want her to die while he was in prison.

“ She keeps the clothes you wore when you were a little boy always near her,” the letter continued. “ She has the picture taken of you at the county fair and it is a great comfort to her. ”

Number 60,108 again put aside the letter and sat staring at the steel wall of his cell while he fought to master his emotion. Bill Hawkins stood at the grated door, immovable, hideous perhaps, but solemn, and in his little eyes there was the light of uneasiness that shows in the eyes of a dumb animal when it looks upon a master suffering.

Montgomery read the last page. Miss Wadhams, in her provincial way, had tried to inject into this sad missive a note of cheer. She and other friends would always see that the little mother was all right. He need never worry about her bodily comfort. The flower garden was pretty during the past summer, just as pretty as it was when he left the summer before to seek work in the city. The Williamson house next door had been sold and was going to be put in good repair.

Old Mr. Williamson, so long a friend and fellow lodge member with his father, had died and the family was broken up.

He finished this gossip of a well intentioned friend while there pounded in his head the frightening thought: his mother was nearing death. He might never see her face again, not even for the final parting of son and mother.

For a moment he thought frantically of trying to break out of prison and hurrying to her. If he could get a little start, he could swim the Hudson and make his way home in time to kneel beside her bed, clasp her thin hands in his and comfort her and breathe his love to her as she passed into the valley of the shadow. He glanced about him as if in the hope that God would bring some miracle to pass and that the steel walls and bars would melt and the stone crumble.

Bill had swung himself up into his bunk. Montgomery looked up and saw his little eyes watching him keenly. His attitude was that of a great beast crouched for a spring upon his prey. But ugly as was the face that hung over the iron ledge above, there was a strange softening of the lines, a melting of the features. There was compassion

illumining the countenance of this creature with prognathous jaw and sloping brow.

"Trouble at home, Kid?" he asked, his harsh voice mellowing with the kindly spirit that prompted the question.

Number 60,108 nodded his head. The open letter in his hands told the tale.

"Gee, I wish you knew how to cuss, Kid," sighed the burglar. "When things come hard on me I get rid of it all with a good, long, healthy swear. It does me an awful lot of good. I learned the art from Cockney Tim Maddigan, who's over in Clinton prison now, doing three sixes. He could certainly swear. One time down in the old Gas House district, I heard him rip 'em out so that Scar Reilley almost fainted with envy. I took lessons from him."

The boy shook his head but the earnestness of his cell companion brought the faint flicker of a smile to his lips.

Bill realized that he had turned the boy's thoughts away from his bitter introspection for the moment at any rate and he followed up the good work.

"They used to call me 'Roaring Bill 'Awkins,'"

he went on. "Being as you don't know how to swear artistic and satisfactory, I'll just swear for you. No, don't object. I'll think 'em to myself and not say a thing out loud."

He swung down from his high pallet.

There was still a half hour before the lights would be cut off and this was the best possible time for violating prison regulations.

"You stand at the door and keep a sharp lookout, Kid," he said. "I want to take a peek at this newspaper you've won by good conduct."

The first newspaper that had reached their cell lay unfolded on Montgomery's bed.

Bill turned his back to the door as the boy stood guard and hungrily read the headlines, scanned the illustrations and revelled in a luxury he had not earned.

The discovery of this violation by a guard would have cost Montgomery his white disc and the loss of forty-five marks. He gave a sigh of relief when the lights went out and Bill could no longer imperil the disc and chevron on his sleeve.

The boy was half asleep when Bill leaned over the edge of his resting place and whispered: "Kid !"

Montgomery rose on his elbow and whispered back that he was listening.

"I got a scheme that's a wonder," Bill told him. "You know what I told you about getting a suit of clothes for the getaway?"

"Yes."

"I got it all doped out."

"How will you manage it?"

"Never mind." He chuckled under his breath. "And as for a hat! Say, Kid, I can get any kind of a hat you want to wear. But I'll tell you about it in the morning."

## CHAPTER IX

**H**OWEVER bright and sweet the outside world may be at the rising of the sun, every break of day is as twilight to the prisoners in Sing Sing. The little, barred slits in the gray walls admit only light enough to make corridor and cell shadows deeper and more fantastic.

Number 60,108 and Bill Hawkins were out of their bunks before the clanging of the bell. Bill grinned very knowingly as they pulled into their baggy gray suits. He crooked his right index finger and held it before the boy.

"See that?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Montgomery, wondering.

"It is exactly one inch, that second joint. I'm going to measure you for your suit. Turn around."

Montgomery turned, facing the door, and Bill stepped behind him. He felt the finger joint pressing against his shoulders, as Bill took the dimensions for the piece of the coat he was to fashion



surreptitiously. As he worked, he explained his scheme in a whisper.

"The color of the cloth is all right," he said, "but it is the baggy shape of the coat and pants that gets an escaped convict in Dutch. I'll remember these measurements and swipe the stuff and cut it in the shop. I'll do one piece at a time. In the cutting room there's Isaacs, the Butcher, on my right and Idaho Shorty on my left. They'll be blind. They won't say a thing to anybody and they won't see a thing. I'll smuggle in the suit piece by piece and swipe the basting stuff, needles and thread." He finished the three dimensions of the first piece of the coat he was to make and was satisfied.

"One piece at a time," he said to himself. "When I get 'em all done, I'll sew 'em together by hand right here in this handsome little one-room flat."

Montgomery's experienced burglar friend was taking the same interest in him that a father would take in a son at college commencement time.

"When the suit is ready," he told the boy, "you're to put it on under your prison clothes. Then, when you get on the outside, you can peel

off, stick a hat on your head and beat it." He laughed softly to himself.

"And as for hats," he whispered, "it's a good thing I didn't forget that. You couldn't wear that little cheese-box outside, and you couldn't go bareheaded. Everybody in a crowd looks twice at a bareheaded man. But we'll have no trouble about the hat. I'll get one swiped, an old cast-off kelly from one of the prison offices."

The boy wondered at the goodness and kindness that lay hidden in the heart of this old offender against society, who looked almost a monstrosity and yet was as gentle as a child.

"Just keep your young noodle clear," advised Bill. "Don't be in any hurry. Whenever you see a chance that promises, tell me about it and we'll talk it over. All the time I'll be working on this suit and I'm going to make a swell job of it, see?"

"And suppose I do get out, Bill," suggested Montgomery, "and I patent my inventions and make a fortune; how am I ever going to repay you?"

"Well, I'm fifty years old, now," replied the burglar. "When I get out I'll be sixty-five and

still a burglar, perhaps. Mebbe I'll be able to run in on you somewhere and you can help me keep straight, give me a job, lock me up at night and treat me like a human being in the daytime. I ain't been treated like a human in so long I've clean forgot how it feels."

The old burglar's face clouded for a moment and his heavy jaw clamped tighter.

"Say, Kid," he said huskily, "never breathe it, will you? I had a boy of my own once. He'd be just your age if he'd lived. I wanted him to live and that's why I'm here. I needed more money than I could make to send him to the mountains to be cured of the white bugs—the T. B. I just had to get the money and so I went in on a house-breaking job. Well, the boy didn't get to the mountains; he died of consumption. The cops got me and I came to this place for my first bit."

Montgomery could say nothing. His heart was filled with pity and sympathy for his friend.

"I ain't in the habit of squealin' when I'm hurt," Bill went on after a pause, "but I don't mind telling you that if I could have got away with the swag and turned it into money for that boy of

mine, 'I wouldn't have minded going up for the five years I got. But one of the gang hollered and the bulls got all the loot. When I got out after my bit, the boy was dead and his mother was — well, she was worse than dead, they told me. It ain't the man who goes to prison that does all the suffering. It's his wife and babies that take the punishment."

"Could you find her — your wife?" asked Bill's protégé.

"Find her?" he repeated. "I found where she started to join the down-and-outs and that was enough for Bill. And she was a good girl, too. I didn't want to see her finish. She had seen me try to steal and get away with it and saw what happened to Bill. She was afraid to try the same game. The police didn't mind her doing the other thing. All she had to do was to give up to the cops a little piece of change every now and then. I guess she got to be a regular — a regular — cruiser."

The voice of Bill Hawkins had become hollow. It was as if his share of trouble had driven from him every trace of human emotion and feeling. But with the last ugly word of his brief narrative

the voice broke and Number 60,108 saw that his hands trembled.

"A cruiser?" asked the boy.

"You don't know what that means," replied Bill. "It means a woman for sale on the streets."

Both were silent as they finished preparing to answer roll-call and march to the mess hall for breakfast.

"Bill," Montgomery finally suggested, "perhaps if I get out and all goes well, I might be able to find her and help her. I'd treat her almost as if she was my own mother."

"You would!" gasped the burglar. "You would, boy?"

"I would be glad to."

"But she's gone wrong."

"It wasn't her fault."

The gong clanged and they stepped to their cell door, as did sixteen hundred others in the walled city of silence.

The old burglar put a hand on Montgomery's shoulder.

"Boy," he said, "you got a heart of gold."

## CHAPTER X

**T**O put the risk of detection at its minimum, Bill Hawkins proceeded with his task of making the suit of clothes for his companion's getaway with such caution that it promised to cover a whole year of work.

To steal the cloth, piece by piece, was no easy task. The eyes of the guards were keen and there were convicts who were suspected of doing the work of spies for the prison officials. Every night for a month Bill reported to Montgomery his efforts of the day, and at the end of that time he brought under his blouse enough cloth for the first section of the suit.

To cut it in the dimensions he had rivetted in his memory was even a harder task. The greatest care was taken to prevent the theft of tools, and a missing pair of scissors would have resulted in a search of the cells of all those who worked in the cutting room. He was compelled to cut the cloth right under the noses of the guards in the cutting

room. "The Butcher" and "Idaho Shorty" sheltered him as much as they could as he worked furtively and quickly, and, finally, after two months, the first piece of the coat was made. It was smuggled into the cell and stowed away in the mattress of Bill's bunk. Stolen needles and thread were used to sew up the seams of the mattress again.

Montgomery could have stolen a sharp knife from the machine shop so that Bill could work in the cell, but the old burglar would not let him run the risk. Discovery of such a theft would have meant the loss of disc and chevrons and a transfer to some other branch of prison work.

The second autumn in prison passed into the second winter and Bill still stuck to his task. Spring came and all of the pieces for the coat were ready and in the cell, safely hidden away. To assemble them Bill would have to make every stitch by hand.

At night, after the supper hour, the two prisoners washed out their towels and hung them on a piece of string in their cell. Behind these the burglar crouched as Montgomery watched at the door. He sewed until the lights went out but the

work was slow and painful. He had no thimble and one finger after another was worked into a pulpy condition. The making of the coat took all summer but Bill was so interested in the task that he even sewed in his bunk after the lights were turned off, feeling every stitch in the dark with raw fingers that spilled blood, but with patience that never flagged.

Another year was started and the coat was finished. Bill stole the cloth for the trousers which would replace the tubelike nether garment of the prison uniform. With never a word of complaint and never a sigh of fatigue, Bill Hawkins tackled the final stretch of his self-imposed slavery. Every half hour during the night the tier guard made a round of the cells, flashing his hand electric light upon each bunk. Bill could sense his coming and would feign sleep, with his work under his body, as he reached his cell.

All the while Number 60,108 was perfecting himself in mechanical work. His ability and industry were fully appreciated by the deputy warden in charge of the machine shop and he advanced rapidly to the point where he was given the more intricate tasks, requiring delicacy of



work and much careful thought. His splendid record for conduct also added to the favors he received and soon he was informed that he would be the man to succeed the convict foreman, when he was given his liberty.

As foreman of the shop, Montgomery would have a degree of liberty given to few convicts. On busy days he would be exempt from roll calls, and, when the care of machinery required it, he could spend his evenings in the shop. He would superintend the acceptance and assembling of all new machines and parts of machines and the disposal of the old.

The coveted white disc remained on his sleeve and a new chevron was added with each year.

"We'll wait until you get the job as foreman," Bill decided. "When you take charge and get the hang of things, then we can plan the way out. Another year or two ain't going to hurt you. You want to get such a start, once you're out, that they won't close in on you and drag you back, Kid. It's worth waiting for."

One day Number 60,108 was called from his task and given a new blouse. On the left sleeve was a clean white disc and under it, where the chevrons had been, a white star. This signified

that he had served five years with perfect conduct. That same day the convict foreman went before the board of parole and was allowed time off due him for his good marks shown on the prison record. He was allowed a day for every three marks, the total being subtracted from his sentence.

Montgomery became the foreman and took charge of the machine shop force. He was now twenty-six years old and had developed from a scrawny country boy into a well-built and handsome man. His eyes were grave and his mien serious. He appeared to be well beyond thirty years of age.

During the early part of this fifth year, Montgomery had begun to steel himself for the news from home that would tell him that his mother's life was closed. She was hopelessly blind, wrote Miss Wadhams, and was worn to a shadow. He was ready for the trial and knew that it was at hand when a trusty brought him a black-bordered letter with an order granting him permission to retire to his cell for the rest of the day.

He left the machine shop and in the quiet of the deserted tier read the message.

"Your mother died calling your name," wrote

Miss Wadhams. "She seemed to behold your face and it appeared as if she was talking to you. She smiled very sweetly, as if there had never been a trouble come in her life. She sighed and her blind eyes closed forever."

"Oh, mother! Oh, my mother, my mother!" sobbed the young man, dropping to his knees.

Bill found him praying beside his cot when he came in at the close of the day's work. The black-bordered envelope in Montgomery's hand told him as much as words could tell him. He patted his grieving companion on the shoulder as a father would caress a son in dire trouble.

In the shelter of their towels, stretched across the cell, he drew the completed gray suit from its hiding-place.

Montgomery rose to his feet.

"They put in the new machinery this week, Kid, don't they?" Bill asked.

Montgomery nodded.

"And they ship out the old machines?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's time to make the getaway."

## CHAPTER XI

THE prison warden desired to install the new machinery at night so that he could save all possible loss of actual working time of the convicts. He conferred with his new foreman and Montgomery declared the plan feasible. By having crates and boxes built in the carpentry division and in readiness, the work of shipping out the displaced machinery could be rushed while the new was being put up.

The new foreman was instructed to go ahead, make measurements for the crates and have the work done and the product delivered to him in the machine shop.

The new equipment was on the freight platforms at the Ossining station. All that was necessary was to have it brought to the prison and installed after the whistle blew for the end of the regular day's work.

Montgomery busied himself with these preliminaries and among the boxes he had constructed was one about six feet in length and oblong in shape. It was the coffin that would take him from a living grave to the heaven of clean air, sunlight and wide sky.

He found it necessary to make certain changes in the construction of this particular box. The top was screwed down and an opening was made at one end. In the clutter and clatter of work attending the preparations for the quick replacement of the old machinery, the eyes of the keenest guard would not have noticed that the headpiece of this particular box was so built that it could be closed and made fast from within.

The last shipment out at night would be at eleven o'clock. When the whistle blew, half an hour before the call for supper, Montgomery went to his cell to wash up. The other convicts were being marched from the shops to their tiers and the stone walls echoed the tramping of their feet. Ranks were broken in the corridors between the cells in the dormitories.

Bill and Montgomery reached their cell together. The time was at hand for the attempt at

escape. The burglar ripped open his mattress and drew out the gray suit.

“Be fast now,” advised Bill. “I’ll cover the door. Get out of your clothes and get the suit on, then slip the regulars over them.”

Montgomery had stripped off his blouse when the signal for assembly sounded suddenly.

Both men started with fear. The signal meant an inspection and had come, as it always does, without warning. For a moment Bill hesitated in thought. Then he grabbed the suit of gray from Montgomery’s hands and swathed it about his own body under his blouse.

The men were already lining up in the corridor, and they joined them. The cause for the assembly was soon made known in whispers and signs passed along by the convicts. Some one in the cutting room had stolen two pairs of scissors and a bodkin, both dangerous weapons. The cell of every man working in that department would be searched.

There were only five men, including Bill, in that tier who worked at tailoring. Two guards searched their cells and the five men were ordered to step to the front. Guards searched them

carefully. One of the searchers pulled up Bill's blouse and saw the hidden suit of clothes. He looked up with astonishment for he had expected no such find.

"What's this?" he demanded.

Bill made no answer. He was white with rage and dismay.

The warden in charge of the tier was summoned and the suit was examined carefully.

"Who is his cell mate?" the warden asked of a guard.

"Number 60,108," was the reply.

"And he didn't know a thing about it," grunted Bill surlily. "I did that job at night when he was asleep and kept the stuff hidden in my mattress. You can see where the top of the mattress is ripped open."

"Getting ready to attempt an escape, eh?" asked the warden.

Bill nodded. "I'd have been out by now but for that milksop in my cell," he blurted. "He's one of these guys who says his prayers every night. I was afraid he would tell on me and so I never let him in on it."

Bill had saved his friend and with no mean

sacrifice. The star and the disc on Montgomery's sleeve had helped in the free acceptance of Bill's story.

A guard found the scissors and bodkin in another convict's cell, and ranks were broken and the men permitted to finish the wash-up for supper.

Bill was sent back to his cell and Montgomery followed him.

"Why did you do it, Bill?" asked the young man. "Why did you do it? The penalty is fifteen marks for every month of your minimum sentence. That means twenty-seven hundred marks against you and there is an added day of sentence for every three marks."

Bill had calmly taken nine hundred days, nearly two and a half years, added time, to help his companion. But he had no time to talk over the matter now. He addressed Montgomery brusquely. The minutes were precious.

"The suit's gone," he said. "You've got to beat it for the Hackensack meadows by freight over on the other shore. Leave the freight at Homestead and make for the marsh grass. It is six feet and more high. They can't track you through it. You'll find little hummocks of hard



ground above highwater mark. Look sharp and find one with a puddle of rain water on it if you can. Be careful about quicksands. There's two quicksand holes northwest of Homestead. Go in the other direction."

The old burglar talked rapidly and without moving his lips. The words came in a whispered streak to the ears of Montgomery. Third term men became ventriloquial and the rule of silence falls beneath their skill.

He reached under Montgomery's mattress and pulled out a felt hat. "Slip this under your blouse," he said.

He flipped over his own mattress and his quick fingers tore open the under sheet of ticking. He found five ten-dollar bills, sewed together as one.

"Put this in your kick," he told Montgomery. "You will need it. Don't ask any questions. There ain't time. I had it slipped in from the outside."

In two minutes more they would say good-by to each other if the escape was successfully managed.

"Don't forget the old man, Kid," Bill said solemnly. "I don't know how much it counts,

but you might think of me at night when you say your prayers. If you make out all right, get a personal in the Herald and sign it 'Kid.' The Butcher is on his good behavior and gets the paper regular. He'll watch for it and let me know. Any kind of code you make up we can dope out in here."

The bell sounded for mess formation.

Bill held out his hand and Montgomery took it in both of his.

## CHAPTER XII

THE open head of the oblong box in the machine shop lay between the legs of the table at which convict Number 60,108 made his record of machinery received and machinery shipped from the prison. The box was addressed in heavily inked letters: "Sampson Machine Works, New York City, via New York Central." Apparently it was ready to be taken from the prison.

Four men were staggering out of the shop with a crated machine when the convict at the desk asked how many more pieces their wagon could take.

"One more," replied one of the men.

"Can you handle this long box to finish the load?"

"It's just right to finish up with for the night."

"All right. Take it out when you return. I may be out of the shop. It is time to turn in. I will put it down on my list as having been sent."

The convict foreman turned and went to the little office of the superintendent of machine shops.

"The last load for the night will be off in a few moments, sir?" he informed that official.

"Very good. As soon as the last piece goes, you may report to your tier guard and turn in," the superintendent replied.

Number 60,108 returned to his shop. He ordered two fellow convicts who had been assisting him to report for good night to the superintendent. He saw them obey his instructions and leave the building.

Montgomery was alone in the room and at his desk. He pretended to be writing in his record of shipments. At his feet lay the oblong box with the trick end under the desk and ready to be snapped in place.

Outside he heard the clatter of the heavy shoes of the truckmen approaching. He bowed over his desk for a moment and then disappeared. A gray form wriggled feet first into the box and the end under the desk suddenly closed with a slight click.

The truckmen entered, shouldered the coffin-like case and, finding it lighter than they had ex-

pected, hastened their steps that they might quickly finish with their job for the night. They passed out of the shop to the quadrangle, heaved the box to the rear of the loaded truck and roped it on.

It was nearly eleven o'clock and the stars were obscured by clouds. Arc lights made the quadrangle as bright as day and illumined the high walls and every nook and corner. Sentries in their little octagonal boxes stood with their rifles in hand, keeping a sharp lookout.

A team of powerful horses tugged at the burden and the load of machinery was started out. At the gate the head truckman told the guard that his job was done for the night and gave him a slip containing the list of pieces entrusted to him to deliver at the Ossining freight station.

In another half-minute convict Number 60,108 was outside of the walls of Sing Sing. He braced himself with his knees and elbows when the truck jolted over rough places in the road.

Bill had told him that he would find a path down the cliff a half mile north of the prison. It would lead to the railroad tracks. He was to find it and get away from main roads.

Montgomery counted on one hour before his tier guard would demand an explanation of his absence at the machine shop and then give the alarm.

He estimated the distance by the speed of the horses and at the proper moment released the end of the box. He drew himself forth and tumbled, with a sidewise twist, to the soft, earth road. On hands and knees he scrambled into the shadow of some bushes and took his bearings. His instructions from Bill were to look for a house with a double porch and a high-peaked roof. Opposite this house he would find the path down the cliff to the tracks. His estimate of the distance traveled by the truck proved a good one and he found no trouble in locating the house and then the path.

The road was deserted and the houses all dark. The only sound was the creaking of the load of machinery, which rapidly became fainter and fainter. He plunged down the path and, at the bottom of the cliff, turned and ran to the south through the little tunnel under the prison.

There were six miles to cover to Tarrytown, then three and a half miles across the Hudson to Nyack

and then a mile and a half westward to the West Shore Railroad, which would take him to the meadows of Newark Bay.

Bill's inside information was that at West Nyack he would get an express freight at four in the morning. It would not stop until Homestead was reached; there some of the cars would be shunted to the Erie tracks, and he would be able to slip into the tall marsh grass just as day was breaking.

Montgomery had five hours in which to make the schedule outlined for him by his burglar friend. He took the cinder path between the tracks, brought his clenched hands to his chest and started to run in a swinging stride, his mouth closed and his head thrown back.

It was not easy going, for the prison brogans are made of heavy, stiff leather, with soles that would sink a diver to his task below the sea. His heels and toes were badly blistered by the end of his second mile and he was compelled to stop and rest. He did not dare lie down for fear that fatigue might close his eyes in sleep.

When his feet had cooled and his breathing had become normal again, he climbed to the top of a

great rock and looked toward Ossining. In the velvet distance he could see the prison lights high on the cliff above the village station. Below the cliff he saw tiny lights twinkling and at first he thought them fireflies. His years within prison walls had destroyed his sense of perspective. He studied these will-o'-the-wisp lights and soon realized that they were from lanterns swinging in the hands of men hunting him.

The fugitive turned, threw back his head and began to run. He increased his speed gradually until he struck a gait he thought he could hold for an hour without rupturing a blood vessel. The torn skin on his heels fell away under the chafing of the heavy leather and exposed the quick of his flesh. Blood began to fill his shoes but as he ran he kept telling himself that he could well afford to suffer ten times the torture if he reached his goal — his liberty.

He felt as if he had discarded his number and was once again James Montgomery, a human being, out in the open, the ground beneath him and the river running beside him. It was early summer and the cool night air was sweet with the fragrance of breathing flowers and fields.



His good lungs drew in the balsamic air and pumped oxygen into his blood. But for the ever increasing pain of his torn feet, he felt that he could run more than the full Marathon course with ease.

Ahead of him showed the northern boundary lights of Tarrytown. Once he looked over his shoulder as he ran but he could not see the lanterns of the hunters. He was beginning to gather stronger hope of ultimate escape when the will-o'-the-wisp lights showed ahead of him. He stopped short in his tracks.

It was evident that the Sing Sing officials had telephoned the police of surrounding villages. To his left was the open country, but with villages every three or four miles and from each village, perhaps, a squad of men with lanterns, forming a circle to close in on him.

To his right was the river and the country beyond, a country he knew as only one could know who roamed it in boyhood. He lost no time in deciding.

Montgomery ran to the river's edge and stripped off the heavy prison shoes. He peeled off the blood-soaked socks and from one of them took

the money Bill had given him; this he tied in an end of his shirt under the blouse. Then he hid the shoes and socks under a pile of rubbish and waded out into the river.

The clouds still covered the stars overhead and the river was black as a river of ink. As the water reached his armpits, he threw himself forward and began to swim with a quiet, underhand stroke for the other shore. The tide was flowing out and he began to cross diagonally, to get the full advantage of the current. He figured that, with a steady stroke, he would land just south of Nyack and in the great, friendly shadow of Grand View.

He used a bright light high above the river's edge on the Palisades for making this course. After two miles he would reach the shallows, where he would find the poles of fishing nets spread by the rivermen. There he could stop and rest. He had swum the river as a boy for the fun of it; as a man and with a man's strength he was swimming it now for life.

There was not a craft to be seen on the river. It would be daybreak before the night line steamship from Albany would pass between Tarrytown and Nyack.

Reaching the middle of the river, he changed his stroke. Until now he had kept his shoulders under water, swimming underhanded. Now he used the fast and powerful overhand swing of the arms, resting himself from time to time by rolling on either side and using the easier side stroke.

He reached the net poles and paused to get his wind, but he was off again in a moment and soon made the shore. The tide was well out and he found refuge under the landing pier of a boat club. He uttered a prayer of gratitude as he pulled off his heavy blouse and trousers and wrung them free of water. He was without shoes but he did not fear rocks and shards in his path to liberty and life and happiness. He would have gone barefoot through coals of fire to the goal he had set for himself. Then, too, he knew the soft country lanes and field paths leading from Nyack to West Nyack.

A village clock struck the hour of two.

Montgomery's heart leaped within him. He could make the fast freight, a mile and a half across country, easily. He started from the river at a fast walk.

## CHAPTER XIII

**W**HEN the fast freight on the West Shore, from West Nyack to Jersey City, stopped with a grunt and a clangor of iron couplings at Homestead, a creature that seemed more a reptile than a human crawled from a brake-beam under the last car, wriggled from the cross-ties and disappeared in the marsh.

The soft mud closed over each track of hand and knee and the tall grass and cattails merely quivered for a moment and then fell back in position to hide with a friendly curtain the hunted thing that had sought sanctuary there.

A stiff breeze from the sea had swept the horizon clear of clouds and had lifted the mist that descends at night upon the moorlands near the harbor of New York. Soft gray, with a faint diffusion of opal tints, lighted the sky and gradually paled into death the light of the morning star. The first chirps of the blackbirds, robins and spar-



A creature that seemed more a reptile than a human wriggled from the cross-ties and disappeared in the marsh.

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rows announced with the glow above that the day was beginning. A catbird, the mocker of the Northern latitudes, began to try out his voice, imitating the warblers with roulades of throaty and rich notes. The pink blossoms of the marshmallows nodded in the breeze sweeping saltily from the sea and the dried sedge top made a pleasant, whispering sound.

Hidden in the widestretching fen, Montgomery saw and revelled in the joy of the first sunrise he had looked upon in five years, made glad his starved soul with the sound of the birds stirring from their nests and in his heart echoed a *Te Deum* for his deliverance from prison walls.

The long ride on the brakebeam had covered his face, hands and clothes with dust and grease until he seemed a part of the bog in which he had sought shelter from the hounds at his heels. Moving cautiously, and always fearful of a pit of quicksand, he sought one of the high and dry hummocks Bill had told him of.

He needed sleep and rest, for he had worn out his feet and legs in the race from Sing Sing to North Tarrytown and his arms in the swimming

of the river. Clinging under a freight car for the rest of the flight had racked every nerve and muscle in him.

Montgomery came to a little estuary of the bay piercing the marsh grass. On the other side he could see, as he peered through the rent he made in the green wall, a rise in the marsh level and, topping it, a cluster of wild flowers. He recognized it as his refuge against high tide and a place where he could lie down and sleep.

With a few strokes the escaped convict made the other side and gained the hummock. He found it dry and littered with an accumulation of withered and fallen stalks and leaves. No bed ever felt so soft and alluring to a worn creature. He threw himself down upon the litter, shielded his grimy face with an arm and was asleep in a moment.

The sun at meridian beat down in a straight shaft upon the sleeping man and gnats and mosquitoes fed upon him, but still he slept. Only semi-conscious of the act, he pulled his gray blouse over his head and face and stuck his hands under it when the torture became too great. The winged pests preyed upon his torn feet and in his sleep



he protected them by burrowing with his toes in the litter of his tiny island refuge.

In the afternoon the breeze from the sea increased to a gale as the tide reached the flood and the skies became overcast. A great clap of thunder awakened the sleeping fugitive. He put his hands to his face, swollen with the bites of the insects, then looked about him with half closed eyes and remembered. The water was lapping at his feet.

The wind had sent mosquitoes and gnats to cover. He stripped and washed himself clean. A glance at the heavens told him that soon the rain would fall. He had been twenty-four hours without a drink of water or a particle of food. Bill had warned him about the tortures of thirst. He placed the felt hat given him by the burglar so that it would catch the rain; he followed Bill's advice and of his blouse made a little cloth reservoir supported on sticks of driftwood. The fall of the rain on his naked body and upturned face would reduce the fever set up by the stings of the pests, and he would hoard as best he could what rain water he could catch in blouse and hat.

Montgomery stood on the highest point of his little place of refuge and found that his eyes topped

the marshline. He broke several branches of wild flowers and held them so that his head would be concealed as he made his observations.

To the north he saw a weatherbeaten shack, perhaps the rendezvous of Jersey fishermen or an abandoned duck hunters' club. It was distant less than a hundred yards and he determined to visit it after nightfall in the search for food and clothes. Just beyond it was a trolley trestle and he saw a car whizzing across it at full speed.

The rain began to fall and the first splashing of it against his body was as a flow of ointment to the sores of Job after a flood of stale words from his comforter Bildad, the Shuhite.

He remembered that Bill Hawkins had warned him against dry weather in the meadows. The county constabulary had set fire to the parched grass to smoke out escaped convicts in times gone by and there had been several poor devils baked alive. The rain would save him from this dreadful menace. He felt that God was good and caring for him again. His profound faith in Him was made sweeter for this mercy.

Up from the distant ocean the clouds rolled in great, black folds, ripped raggedly in white

streaks, as the lightning played and as the thunderous voices proclaimed that a hot sky and a smiling sea had brought forth a summer's storm.

Holding his shield of wild flowers about his head, Montgomery gazed upon the spectacle, standing naked to the fall of the rain, fearless of the lightning seams in the troubled curtain above him, reverent of nature as he was of nature's Master, and fearful only that the blouse with the white disc and star beside him might upset and spill the precious drops of fresh water.

The gale increased as the afternoon waned, and as his cloth reservoir filled, he squatted beside it, making fast the sticks that held the corners and carefully guarding it. Twice he leaned over and drank thirstily when it filled and began to overflow.

He was groping for more sticks of driftwood to strengthen his reservoir supports when a white object in the marsh grass struck his eye.

In the gloaming of a stormy twilight he could not make out just what the object was and he parted the grass and leaned nearer. He recoiled with a little cry of horror. He had looked upon the face of a drowned man!

With the storm above him and beating upon him and with the marsh stretching around him, a vision of death had come to pay him a visit.

For several minutes he stood naked and shivering, awed but not frightened. Then he parted the grass again, reached down and dragged to his little island the abandoned tenement of a man's soul.

From the yearly average of more than three hundred bodies that are taken from the waters about New York City, this one poor relic of a human existence had been swept by the tide and the wind to the feet of a living creature who had escaped from a tomb.

James Montgomery knelt beside the body and prayed. And as he prayed, there came to his mind the thought that none other than his Merciful Father in Heaven had sent to him this outcast of life. He had brought with him an offering of a suit of clothes.

In the pitch black of a night of storm, the fugitive put upon the dead man the blouse with the white disc and white star of honor and the baggy trousers.

In the soaked and muddied suit of working

clothes he took in exchange, Montgomery knelt for a final prayer in parting with the dead and then disappeared in the marsh grass toward the nearest shore lights.

## CHAPTER XIV

**A**S the men directing the bands of hunters reported by telephone from hour to hour that no trace of the escaped convict had been found, the warden of Sing Sing extended his zone of search.

Police headquarters in New York City was notified by telephone and a request made that men be sent to watch all incoming trains, freight and passenger.

It was a case for the plain-clothes men and Inspector Ranscombe was reached by telephone at his home.

“What is the name of the convict and how long a term did he have?” asked the inspector over the wire.

“James Montgomery and he was in for life for murder,” the headquarters lieutenant informed him.

“Where was he sent up from?”

“From New York.”

“ One of our cases? ”

“ Yes, sir; he was convicted of second degree murder and sent up five years ago.”

“ Yes, I recall now. It was the West End National Bank case. Mike Kearney handled it, didn't he? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, shoot the men from the Harlem and Bronx stations to the railroad yards and tell 'em to round up all the hoboes and suspicious characters they run into. Let Kearney sleep until seven in the morning and then get word to him. Tell him his man Montgomery is out and that he is to handle the matter if he is not recaptured by that time.”

“ All right, sir.”

Within fifteen minutes all the available detectives from the Harlem and Bronx precincts were busy finding and arresting all incoming tramps and wayfarers of the night.

At seven o'clock in the morning Sing Sing reported failure to recapture the escaped “ lifer ” and the Oak Street police station was instructed over the telephone to send a man to the little flat in Oliver Street and rout out Mike Kearney.

Mrs. Kearney, who was about to start for early mass, dropped her beads and her "Key of Heaven" and hurriedly prepared a breakfast as her son dressed. He was for hurrying to headquarters without a second's delay but she made him swallow a cup of coffee and three soft-boiled eggs first.

"Half the time you don't stop to eat when ye're on a case," she said reproachfully. "If one of me own people was in trouble I wouldn't be wantin' the likes of me son Mike to start after him."

Kearney grunted, felt at his hip to be sure that his gun was there, pulled his hat over his eyes and departed.

At headquarters the lieutenant in charge of the detective bureau informed him that there was no reason for haste.

"The inspector just telephoned for you to wait here until he comes," he told Kearney. "Jim Montgomery, the yegg you sent up for life, escaped from Sing Sing last night and —"

"What?" gasped Kearney.

The tone of his voice was that of a man who had been deeply aggrieved.



"Yes," said the lieutenant. "He's got a good eight hours' start of those Sing Sing boneheads. We've had men at all the railroad yards since midnight but if he came this way they all missed him."

"How'd he get out?"

"Here's a morning paper. It will give you all the details."

Kearney took the paper and went to the little waiting-room for detectives, stretched himself in a chair with his feet on the table and read a full account of the escape.

He reread the story carefully and then went to the identification bureau and secured all the records in the case of the Police against James Montgomery. He thoroughly refreshed his memory on every point in the case and studied the photographs from the Rogues' Gallery until he felt that he would recognize his man again the moment he laid eyes on him. The inspector arrived at nine o'clock and Kearney was summoned before him immediately.

The passing of five years had made little difference in the appearance of either man. Ranscombe's bristly mustache was a bit whiter and his shaggy head of iron gray hair perhaps some-

what thinner, but the same suggestion of latent ferocity was in his eyes and in the set of his jaw.

Kearney's homely features were unchanged. He was still the type of slow and sure-going man-hunter, stolid, keen-eyed, but without a trace of human emotion.

"Well, Mike," hailed the inspector, "what do you think of the departure of Mr. Montgomery?"

Kearney shrugged his shoulders. "He ain't the first yegg to get out," he said. "They got plenty of money and don't mind spending it. The papers say he was the best machinist in the prison. I guess he'll be using electric drills on safes around the country."

"He was only a boy as I remember him," suggested the inspector, "and somehow he impressed me as truthful, although the evidence convicted him of the crime."

"There's lots of boy wonders among the crooks," replied the detective. "There's the Boston Kid, Little Jimmie Moran, Baby Bernstein and a whole raft of them that's just out of short pants."

"Well, everything is pretty quiet now," said the inspector, "and we might just as well spend

a little time on the Montgomery escape. Do you think you can find him? ”

“ I gotta good start on the job,” Kearney replied. “ We got his record. He can grow whiskers, change his name and hide where he wants to, but if I ever get the print of one of his fingers and check up on it, he comes back to Mulberry Street with me.”

Kearney’s voice quavered with eagerness as he spoke. He was hungry for the job and in his soul he was howling to be unleashed that he might start for the game before the trail became cold.

The inspector began to open his mail. As he sorted the personal from the official letters he said, without lifting his eyes: “ Go get him.”

Kearney slipped from the room.

## CHAPTER XV

**I**T is only a part of an hour's journey from the Grand Central Station in Forty-second Street to the prison village of Ossining.

Detective Lieutenant Michael Kearney presented himself in the warden's office at Sing Sing at ten-thirty o'clock the morning after the escape of Convict Number 60,108.

He showed his authority to the warden and said abruptly: "We put him in here for life and we want to get him back here and keep him here."

The warden flushed but controlled his anger.

"You mean that you're going to help us try to recapture this escaped convict," he said coldly.

"Yuh," grunted Kearney. "You got my number."

The detective felt a personal animosity to the warden for having let his quarry escape from the pit into which the police had hurled him.

"Well, this isn't exactly the place to hunt for Number 60,108," the warden said, with a grim

smile. "He left here about eleven o'clock last night."

"Did he have any help from the outside?" asked Kearney.

"None that we know of. He managed to slip out in a box with a lot of machinery."

"Did he get any inside help?"

"None that we know of."

"Did he have a cell mate?"

"He did."

"I'd like to talk with him."

The warden pressed a button and instructed a deputy to bring Convict Number 60,110 before him.

In a few minutes the great hulk of Bill Hawkins showed in the door of the office.

Kearney had taken a chair with his back to a window filled with sunlight.

The old convict saw him but could not make out his features because of the glare in his eyes. He sensed the human bloodhound in him, however. He recognized the big feet and droopy form of the plain-clothes man and was fully acquainted with the old trick of sitting with the back to the light.

Bill nodded to the warden.

"Hello, Bill," was Kearney's greeting. The detective had recognized him as an old offender.

Bill turned to him and walked so that the light would not be directly in his eyes. From a better position he studied the detective's face a moment.

He did not reply to the greeting although he, in turn, recognized Kearney. He turned to the warden and asked: "Did you want anything of me, sir?"

"Yes; the detective here would like to ask you some questions," replied the warden.

"How much more time you got to serve, Bill?" asked Kearney.

"Ten years and then some," was the answer.

"Marks against you?"

The old burglar hesitated.

"He ain't got no stripes on his arm, warden," said Kearney. "Would you mind finding out what the prison charges were against him?"

The deputy warden furnished the record. It showed that on his own confession he had been found guilty of planning to escape and had suffered the addition of more than two years' extra time

to his sentence. A suit of clothes had been found in his cell, the report of the conviction related.

"You got the suit still, warden?" asked Kearney.

"Yes."

The deputy was sent for it.

"Try on the coat, Bill," ordered Kearney, when the clothes were brought him.

"What's all this for?" demanded Bill, uneasily and savagely.

"Pull off your blouse and try it on," insisted the detective.

Bill turned to the warden. "I gotta do what this bull says?" he asked.

"Take it easy, old man," the warden said soothingly. "Try on the coat."

Bill, a smothered volcano of anathemae, did as he was instructed.

The sleeves of the coat reached barely beyond the elbows of his gorilla-like arms and so tight was it that buttons and buttonholes were a good six inches apart.

"You didn't expect to escape in that?" asked Kearney.

The convict ignored the question.

"You made it for your cellmate who did escape," the detective said sharply.

"What are you kicking about?" demanded Bill, his sunken eyes flashing hate as he spoke. "Ain't I taking the extra time?"

"But you don't have to, Bill," coaxed Kearney. "You can get that time taken off and then some of the original sentence too if you will help us out." The bribe was offered.

Bill sneered and looked to the warden as if in supplication that Kearney be kicked from the room.

The warden had no sympathy with the class of work his detective visitor was indulging in. He made a motion with his hand to the convict, a sign to him to control himself.

"Nothing doing," said the old burglar to Kearney.

"You've served a good part of your sentence," suggested Kearney. "Now suppose I get a pardon or a parole through for you, will you help?"

"I don't know nothing," Bill choked out.

Kearney sat quietly for a moment as if deciding on the size and quality of his next bribe offering.

"Bill," began Kearney slowly.



“What?”

“I saw your old girl one night last week — Rosie.”

The heavy jaw of Hawkins dropped and he felt as if the talons of a great eagle had gripped his heart.

“She was pretty hard up,” added Kearney. “She had changed from Broadway to Third Avenue and then to the Bowery.”

Bill’s tongue was protruding over his yellow lower teeth. Rage was choking him.

“She was a pretty girl when I was a kid on the cops,” continued Kearney.

A coughing sound, such as a tiger makes when he swallows a sharp sliver of a bone, came from the convict. A cloud swept by the warden in his chair and fell upon Detective Lieutenant Michael Kearney of police headquarters, New York.

For a moment, Mike Kearney was close to death, but rage had blinded the convict and he fumbled in his reach for the throat of his enemy. A dozen prison attendants were in the room at the sound of the crash and Bill Hawkins was dragged from his prey in time.

The detective struggled to his feet and straight-

ened out his rumpled clothes. When he got his wind he turned to the convict and said: "I guess that means a little more time for you, Bill."

The warden had had enough of the practice of the third degree in his office.

"One minute," he said to the attendants holding Bill. He turned to Kearney. "Have you finished?" he asked.

"Yes."

He turned to the livid old prisoner before him.

"Bill, was this woman he told you about your wife?"

"She's my wife," he panted. "She's got the certificate to prove it. If she's on the Bowery, it's because she didn't have nowhere else to go."

There were no sobs left in Bill, Number 60,110. His eyes had long been wrung of the last tear. God had made him and man had driven him to a corner where his only solace was the curse of the anarchy.

"Go back to your cell, Bill," said the warden.

As the convict was taken away the warden turned to his desk and started to read the reports of his deputies.

Kearney took the hint and with a grim smile

on his homely face left the office. Not a bit discouraged, he caught the next down train, left it at Tarrytown and crossed on the ferry to Nyack.

He would try Montgomery's own people in the hope of breaking out a good lead to his quarry.

## CHAPTER XVI

**D**ETEKTIVE LIEUTENANT KEARNEY, after several days in Nyack, returned to New York, and from the old gray building in Mulberry Street put into operation all the resources of the finest and most inexorable police system in the world, to the end that James Montgomery might be taken back to a Sing Sing cell to end his life there.

Working on the trite axiom that chickens come home to roost, Kearney had looked up every friend of the Montgomery family in Nyack and the country around. He had impressed the town police with the necessity for alertness and patience in aiding in the recapture of the escaped convict.

Montgomery would come back some day to the place of his birth. When the exile years grew stale and profitless, the *heimweh* would get him and he would succumb to it.

He arranged with the postal department to put

a watch on all letters sent to the immediate friends of his quarry and his dead and buried mother. Tantalizingly fond thoughts of home, of parents, of old sweethearts, of beloved friends or of scenes sweetly and deeply placed in memory, have brought into the waiting and strong net of the police more than half of the prisoners taken.

All this carefully attended to, Kearney had the printer of the police department spread on his forms photographic plates showing Montgomery's face in profile and in full. A reward of one thousand dollars for information leading to his recapture was announced in black type above the pictures; below was given a minute description of the convict, taken from the police records. These circulars were printed and sent to every police center in every city and town in the country. It was a general alarm to every bluecoat and plain-clothes man in the United States to aid in starting up the game from cover.

It was not exciting detective work but Kearney went at it as if his whole career depended on its successful accomplishment. With the aid of a stenographer and a mimeograph he sent special letters to the heads of all big firms employing

machinists. This narrowed the search to a considerable extent.

While this work was under way, Kearney gave the announcement of the reward to the newspapers. Every money-hungry man and woman in the country would keep his or her eyes open for a chance to pick the fugitive from the crowd.

Montgomery, in flight, soon learned of the spreading of the net from Mulberry Street. After leaving the meadows, he managed to find a hiding place in a freight car. He traveled all night and with morning dropped off on the outskirts of a little New Jersey village. He remained in the woods all day, determined that the good start, so providentially given him, should not be lost through any lack of caution on his part.

At a brook, he cleaned himself and the muddied garments he wore and at evening of the second day of his escape he felt that he could present himself among his fellows again. During this time he had appeased his hunger with carrots, radishes and turnips from the edge of a truck farm.

He craved a warming drink and more substantial food. After dark, he entered the village and found a lunch wagon near the railroad station.

It was while eating in this roadside caravanseraï that he overheard two men gossiping about the one thousand dollar reward offered for his recapture.

"It was a daring escape," said the man next him. "The newspapers all wrote it up in fine style and announced that the police would pay the reward. I asked Constable Miklejohn about it and he told me that soon a description and his pictures would be in the hands of every police officer everywhere."

"A thousand dollars is a lot of money," commented the other, cupidously. "When can we see the circular and get a good look at the pictures?"

"The sergeant expects to get some of them by the end of the week."

Montgomery finished his meal in silence, paid for it from the money he had brought with him from prison and departed.

He realized that within a week or ten days he would not dare show his face to a police officer in city or village. He would have to get beyond the police net if he could. It would take time for him to grow a beard and change his appearance.

He would seek refuge in a part of the country where villages and towns were not so closely crowded together. In some remote corner he could, perhaps, secure for himself some little social standing, just enough to feel as if he had some identity other than that written in the police records. He would willingly work his hands to the quick in any form of honest toil for this boon.

He secured a time-table at the railroad station and, finding that a Southern express paused there, bought a ticket to Richmond, Virginia.

On the train he secured copies of the New York newspapers and read the accounts of the search for the escaped convict. In all of the stories reference was made to the fact that he was an expert machinist and he felt that the police would surely look for him among those of his craft. His heart sank within him. How long would it be before he dared go back to the work that he loved and that he was entitled to pursue because of the gift he had to do it fully and because of the years of preparation? His craft was to bring him the means by which some day his name would be cleared so that he would have the inestimable



boon of moving without a police shadow at his heels, of living in the open and of doing his best in the struggle of life.

He coiled up on his seat in a day coach, covered his face with one of the newspapers and fell asleep. When he woke, he was in the South and the passengers for Richmond were crowding the doors of the coach. He felt refreshed and ready to face the day and what came of it.

In the busy and beautiful Virginia city, Montgomery lingered for several days, taking a humble lodging in a cheap boarding-house and gradually equipping himself with a modest wardrobe. He lived with strictest economy, hoarding his scanty supply of money. He yearned for a chance to work with his hands but he feared to show himself in the daytime as yet. There were locomotive works, great tobacco manufacturies, ship yards and other places of industry where a capable machinist might easily find profitable employment but he felt that it was in just such places that the police would seek him. At the end of a week he learned from an afternoon paper that the local police had posted circulars offering a reward for his capture. He saw his own picture on the front page of the

paper and under it a close and accurate description of himself. He would have to move on.

He did not return to his lodging-house for the little supply of clothes he had gathered, though he had paid for his room in advance. He knew that every other city in the country would soon be added to the police mesh and he determined to leave the paved streets for the quiet and seclusion of country roads. In a section of the city where the poorer people did their shopping he bought a tin of meat and a box of crackers. He still had twenty-five dollars and he would have spent the most of it for a kit of tools but he did not dare run the risk. He managed to pick up in a small shop a soldering outfit, a light hammer, resin, a spool of wire and a few other essentials for a tinker's outfit. He made a light pack and, as night was falling, found his way out of the city. It was summer and he could sleep in barns and stables or in the open during fair weather.

As he left the last of the houses behind him, he came to a wide-spreading turnpike. He started southward over this road in search of a haven where he might work under an assumed name and begin life anew.

The stars were bright overhead and the evening sweet and balmy. With a good, long stride he increased the distance between him and the city whose homes held the police pictures of himself printed that day. He determined to travel on foot by night and sleep by day until his beard was fully grown.

## CHAPTER XVII

**I**NTO the lower bay of New York came welling one of the highest tides of the early summer.

The great heave of the ocean crowded the Narrows and rushed into the upper bay, filling the slips on the Jersey City side of the North River to the brim and crowding under to the streets, until the horses stood knee-deep in the brine. Through the narrow Kill von Kull and the Arthur Kull, which separate Staten Island from the mainland, the big tide rushed with the speed of a mill-race into landlocked Newark Bay.

Higher and higher the water rose, until the nests of the marshfowl floated away and only the top of the sedge was to be seen. The highest of the hummocks in the meadows was covered and with the turning of the tide their gatherings of spindrift were returned to the waters whence they came.

The lone, dead visitor that had sought out Montgomery, as he stood naked on his little

dune refuge, departed his transient resting place with an escort of dried sedge and broken sticks floating beside him. The return of the tide to its strange, moonmade lair in the vasty deep, taking with it its reclaimed outcasts, was accompanied with a runic chorus from the marsh grass and the piles of wharves and ferry slips. The strange, flute-like song of the outgoing tide increased as the hurrying waters retreated through the outlets of the bay and the current became stronger. With this funeral music and his sea-motley garland of flotsam, the dead friend of Montgomery floated from Newark Bay through the Kill von Kull to the harbor of New York.

In the light of a full moon the white disc and star of "honor" showed on the left sleeve of the gray sack covering the torso of the corpse. The big tide had brought Montgomery's lifeless friend to the time of his accounting with the living. This one, mighty flood and ebb of water meant the uncovering of the secrets of swamps, mud caverns and the slimy interstices of wreckage.

For almost every day of the year one human seeks the Lorelei song of the tide that flows under the bridges and over the river tunnels of the waters

of New York. Through the winter many are held fastened under the ice, but when the warm weather comes and the rise of the sea is greatest, all come to the surface and drift within the realm of the inquisitive law.

Among the scores of telephone reports from Harbor Squad A at Pier Number 1, North River, during this busy season of the year for the men on the police boats, one read: "Body of convict found floating near Tompkinsville, Staten Island. Sent to morgue."

This report was made direct to Central Office. Mike Kearney was preparing a new circular to send broadcast and stimulate interest in the recapture of James Montgomery when the desk lieutenant called him and showed him the slip from Harbor A. He read it carefully and handed it back, then put his unfinished composition in his desk, picked up his weatherbeaten derby and departed headquarters.

That Board of Health institution, the morgue, rubs elbows with Bellevue Hospital and the Department of Charities and Correction, at the foot of East Twenty-sixth Street, known in the East Side as Misery Lane. Kearney made his

way to this highway of sorrow, of competing undertakers offering bargain rates in shrouds, and of free hospital beds for the poor and free slabs for the dead that have died friendless.

He pushed through the group of haggard mothers seeking the bodies of daughters who had disappeared in the downward drag of the great city's undertow, and asked the morgue keeper to show him the clothes taken from the body of the convict brought in by the harbor police. He examined them and found the white disc and star Montgomery had won by five years of exemplary conduct. This would have assured a careless worker that the body was that of the man who had escaped only recently from Sing Sing. But Kearney was no careless worker. He asked to be shown the body itself and the keeper took him to the damp, circular repository for the city's unclaimed dead.

The morgue keeper pulled out a box on rollers from its desklike casing and the detective looked at the face of the dead man. Because of the wear of the elements he could make no satisfactory identification of the features. A month had passed since his quarry had slipped him.

“Just a minute,” he said to the keeper.

From one of his pockets he produced a little tin box, a sheet of white paper and a brush of camel's hair. The box contained charcoal powder. Kearney reached into the receptacle of the dead body and pulled out the right hand. He dusted the finger tips with the charcoal and pressed them against the paper. With this token as to the identity of the dead man, he returned to police headquarters.

The Bertillon records gave up the tallying card for the finger prints of James Montgomery. Kearney studied the official record and the print he had made at the morgue, and then smiled grimly.

The charcoal prints were of the fingers of a different man!

He went back to his desk and continued the composition of his new circular.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

**A**FTER the fourth night of lonely journeying beneath the stars and three days hidden in forest nooks, drinking from brooks and eating sparsely from his little stock of food, Montgomery found that he would have to change his plan of flight. He was now far enough from the capital of the Old Dominion to feel a degree of safety.

He kept away from the railroad lines and journeyed ever to the south, finding the points of the compass by the sun in the morning and by the pale Northern star during the night. This kept him off from the larger villages with organized police systems and daily newspapers. The farther he got from civilization on a large scale, the deeper became the conviction that he could now afford to risk travel by day. Farmhouses were far apart and for the better share of each day the streets of little hamlets, where the country people did their trading, were deserted. He abandoned living in

the woods under shelters knocked up hastily with boughs and leaves and took the road at day-break one morning, his tinker's pack over his shoulder, ready to be dropped and put in use at the first job that offered.

The whole summer was spent afoot on the highway and it brought to his being that tonic of life which is God-given only, the calm and restful spirit which develops with the frequent contemplation of the changes of the seasons, the coming of the dawn and the falling of the dusk on hills and valleys; in the spring the nimbus of the approaching resurrection of trees and flowers and fields; in the summer the burgeoning of the wide and fair countryside with life and in the autumn falling leaf and fading tree.

If the great city, which sucks from adventuring and plucky youth its glory of red blood and clean minds, had almost annihilated him, as a boy of twenty-one, the country proved kind to him as a man.

In many a pleasant farmhouse he found welcome in the evening after a day of usefulness. Frequently the warm bed under the shingles and the hearty meals offered him in return for his

labor he felt to be wages as great as any man might desire. He met kindness and Godliness at every-hand.

Under his skilful fingers old garden gates took on new life with new hinges and lost their dismal creakings; pumps that had become choked and wheezy responded to the touch of the farmer with ready and bounteous outpourings of sparkling, cold water; implements of husbandry ceased to rattle and do half service; doors, windows, cupboards and creaking stairs were put in good shape, to the delight of worried housewives, while fascinated broods of children clustered about the sun-browned stranger and watched him at his work.

Sometimes he would find a host who would keep him employed for a week or ten days. On such occasions he came to know the families of the Southern planters and to share with them their simple pleasures and their quiet devotion to old ideals and the daily tasks before them. In every tiny farm settlement he found a little white steeple of a clapboarded church topping the oaks and pines and on Sabbath days he joined these little congregations, offering up his constant prayer of gratitude for his deliverance.

The last sickly trace of the prison pallor had left him quickly. A short brown beard and mustache had grown to aid the change of his appearance. The large brown eyes in the bearded face gave the suggestion of one who had suffered much and who had gained the essence of divinity.

In every farmhouse he found a Bible, that book which is a library in itself. Being a tinker, a creature of the highways and byways, he could glimpse and cherish the beauties of the poetry written by Isaiah and Amos and Micah. Because of the inspiration he gained from these old poets of Israel, the loveliness of nature took on added glory. Then, too, he gained access during the long, quiet evenings to other books in the houses where the stranger was made welcome, books that were sweet and old-fashioned, with love and gentleness pervading their every page. With such reading he unconsciously developed intellectually and upon a plane that would surely stamp him in maturer years a gentle man.

This wholesome, if itinerant, life gradually shaped his character to a wonderfully fine combination of saintliness and vigor. The dust and turmoil of a city street again would have made him

reel and become faint. The rush and confusion of a crowded habitation of men would have been to him a veritable court for dragons.

The daughters of men with whom he came in contact in his journeyings were clear-eyed, sweet, old-fashioned girls. Their laughter was as the piccolo music of shadowy streams over pebbles. The sun had daily kissed their cheeks and their hair from babyhood and the bloom upon their lips was sweeter even than the songs they sang at vesper time.

All womanhood he held sacred and as a memorial to the mother he had cherished. He was as yet to meet the one girl who would so stir him that the sweet pain in his heart would make him think of Jacob lifting his voice and sobbing at the sight of Rachel.

Where the five years in prison might have dragged him down to a grade of viciousness that would have scarified his soul, he had come forth from the furnace of affliction clean and a strong man. He had done even more. He had so lived in a cell that an outcast of society had asked him to remember him in his prayers.

Occasionally he would feel that the police net

from Mulberry Street was thrown too closely to him. Going into villages for supplies, he would hear about new efforts to recapture him and of new circulars sent out by his hunters. On such occasions he would hasten back to remote roads and farmhouses.

Would he ever be able to get far enough away from his implacable pursuers to again take up his work with machinery? At night the twinkle of a lantern in the hands of a countryman threading a dark road would bring back to his mind the horror of that moment when he found the will-o'-the-wisp lights ahead of him as well as behind him, as he ran with bleeding feet between Ossining and Tarrytown.

He had taken the name of John Nelson and had saved every penny that he had earned with his little handful of tools. After making long stops in various farmhouses during the autumn and the first winter of his regained liberty, he found himself on the boundary of Virginia and North Carolina.

Ahead of him were the great cotton mills of the South, with their myriad workers and with their great masses of the most modern machinery

turned out by geniuses in invention. In this great mountain belt of industry he felt that he would find his future work.

One day he put aside his humble tinker's kit and applied for work in a cotton mill as a machinist. A year had passed since his escape from the prison on the Hudson. He felt that the time was at hand for him to start the work that might some day bring him fortune and the clearing of his good name.

John Nelson had advanced far beyond the circle of the ordinary man of his craft and he could have pushed rapidly ahead of many of his fellow employees in the first cotton mill where he obtained employment. But he was content with obscurity for awhile yet and he knew that the time would not be wasted, for every hour of it would give him a better grasp of cotton mill work.

He lived in a mill town that seldom saw the coming of strangers and he made his habitat among the poorer class of employees, preferring to spend his board money as a means of help where it was most needed. He made no intimate friends among the people, concentrating all his effort of mind in the study of mill machinery

and in reading works on mechanical engineering, which he borrowed from his superintendent.

Despite his effort to remain in the background of workers, he was quickly recognized as an expert and was advanced in wages as well as in the importance of his tasks. By sheer force of ability he had attained the degree of mechanical engineer and was already at that point of honest attainment when at any moment he might be called to strip off his overalls and step to the desk of a ten-thousand-a-year man.

Nelson did not feel that this first mill was the place for his ultimate effort to reach the top. He had come whence no man knew. He had no past to offer. He could give no reference of any sort as to his life or character. He could never tell truthfully where he had gained the working foundations for the knowledge he possessed.

He prepared to move on and made his first request for a letter of recommendation, which was gladly given by his superintendent. With this bit of paper in his possession, he had established a past. He had something by which he could identify himself as John Nelson, mechanic. No one would have to take his word only; he could



offer this reference. The few kindly words of praise written at his request were more precious to him than silver or gold.

The garments of a laborer were no longer suitable. He parted with them for clothes of better texture. His old pack was cast aside forever, and in its place was a heavy trunk, big enough and strong enough to carry his wardrobe and the books he had begun to buy with his savings.

He said good-by to his first mill and took the train South, crossing the North Carolina State line into the Piedmont section of South Carolina.

His objective was the mountain city of Greenville and the great plant of the Reedy River mills. These mills were situated outside of the city and were famous not only for their superb equipment and product, but also for the administration of their labor and social affairs. They made a community by themselves, a community governed by the president of the company, a humane, wealthy and capable man. Montgomery had every reason to believe that he would be safer employed with the Reedy River Company than he would be elsewhere in the cotton belt.

He sought, first of all, cover from his pursuers. A criminal would have had some pleasure in the game of hide and seek after securing such a good start on the hounds of the law. Some, as many have done in the past, would have run big chances and visited old haunts out of pure bravado. But Montgomery, despite his prison experience and his success in eluding those after him, knew nothing of the excitement and thrill of the life of the lawless. The police had fashioned a mock stain of blood for his hands, had added him to the Gallery of Rogues and had cast him into Sing Sing, but all of this had not been sufficient to make him falter in the path of clean and honest living.

He left the train at Greenville and found it a thriving little city resting in the deep, cool shade of the Blue Ridge mountains. He looked toward the distant giant tumuli; they seemed to him a wall that God had flung up against his pursuers and as a mighty stockade against the evils and miseries of the outside world.

Through the little city flowed the river after which the mills were named, from its parent stream, the Saluda, to make its pleasant way through the underhills terracing the Piedmont.

Peonies and roses, faintly fragrant nasturtiums and honeysuckle made sweet the homes of the dwellers here, while beyond the city's outskirts reared the tall chimneys of the mills, where he felt sure there would be a demand for his skill, his patience and his inventive genius.

He ordered his baggage sent to the hotel near the station and took a trolley car to the mills. He found the superintendent, Howard Lansing, anxious for just such a man, satisfied with the letter of recommendation, and was employed at high wages immediately.

Nelson would report for work the next day. He went back to the city to look about for a quiet, comfortable and remote corner that he could call home. His heart was light for the first time since that dreadful day when he left his own village home and journeyed to New York.

Here, among the mountains, he would make his stand and his fight. Here was the home of John Nelson.

James Montgomery was dead.

## CHAPTER XIX

**H**OWARD LANSING, who had immediate executive charge of the great working force of the Reedy mills, was a master both of man and machinery. At the half century mark of life, he had come to admire and hold as fine two things: ability and decency.

These two things struck cameolike to his vision in John Nelson who had applied to him for work, modestly, as a plain machinist. The restiveness which usually accompanies capacity for work and which promises development or creation of genius was absent in the newcomer at the mills. No tangle of a million threads from the bobbins brought an exclamation of disgust from his lips. No solution of any intricate mechanical problem caused him to exult. If there was anything wrong in the carding room, with its almost ceaseless flow of snowlike cotton and its clamor of mighty steel cogs and rollers, he would set about remedying the defect with the same skill and patience that

a surgeon would show in a moment of individual, human crisis.

Nelson was Lansing's kind of a man and the superintendent invited him to come and live at his home. Both men were taciturn, appreciative but withholding their words, as do most men who handle and care for the wonderfully animated sinews of industry, which speak only with their product. And yet each knew in a very short time that there was appreciativeness and kindly feeling in the other.

Nelson was glad to accept Lansing's offer and transferred his belongings to the superintendent's comfortable home on the curving, red road that runs from Greenville upward toward Paris Mountain. The home was spacious, finely placed upon a site which made every window a stall in God's theatre; the flower garden held every blossom of the mountain country and the library was filled with books that were old and worn friends of their studious owner.

Mrs. Lansing welcomed the stranger, and her little brood of four children soon accepted him as a member of the family. His bedroom windows opened to the blue mountains, which cut him off

from the rest of the world. In these surroundings, which gave him almost the full charm of domesticity, Nelson started his new life with a growing sense of security. He began to feel that it had been ordained for him to suffer in purgatory so that he would better realize the joys of heaven. With his work in the mills and his studies in Lansing's home, the midsummer passed swiftly and the solemn beauty of autumn came over the land.

One day, inspecting the work of her servants, Mrs. Lansing found pinned upon the wall in Nelson's bedroom this verse, which he had found in his random reading of the poets:

Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;  
There lies not any troubled thing before,  
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,  
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,  
All waters as the shore.

There was no idle moment in the day's calendar of hours and minutes for John Nelson. He worked not for the pay that was given, but the pay was increased from time to time and, monthly, his earnings went to swell a bank account that reached three figures.

Two nights of each week the light in his room burned until after midnight. On these nights he labored at his desk on the plans of a device that would mean the saving of thousands of dollars a year in waste from the carding machines of the mills. From his first day's employment the massive, lumbering carding machinery had been to him as a lout of a boy. Its great strength and mighty roar were impressive but for every revolution of the huge rollers that caught the flow of precious cotton there was waste. It filled the air with lint, choking the operatives as they worked. A new adjustment of certain parts of the machinery was the problem engaging his mind. He wrought over his plans until he felt that they would stand the proving test of a model; then the accumulated wages stood him well, as a forgotten friend sometimes stands a man. He had the model built and installed in the attic of the Lansing home.

Power was obtained by connecting a small dynamo with wires supplying the house with electric lights. Cotton was brought from the mills and one night Lansing and Nelson sat for an hour watching the tiny carding machine meet the

new demands of economy put upon it. There was not an ounce of cotton waste!

Nelson oiled the model, replenished it with a new supply of cotton, and for another hour the two men sat and watched it work.

There was no clapping of hands upon shoulders, no outbursts of enthusiasm, although the tests made certain the fact that the man who had asked Lansing for work but a few months before was to be made rich by the product of his genius and his patient toil.

"It's all right, old man," said the mill superintendent.

Nelson nodded.

"If you don't mind I'll call up Mr. Bryan, the president of the company, and inform him," suggested Lansing.

He hurried down the attic stairs and soon had the president on the telephone. He told him briefly what he had seen the model accomplish, and Mr. Byran replied that he would motor over to his house immediately.

The mill president, a gray and courtly gentleman, reached the house within a half hour. It was early evening and the children were not



yet abed. With their mother they had listened to the hum of the working model under the eaves. All were fascinated with the idea that in their home the kindly and silent stranger had achieved a mechanical triumph. They trooped up-stairs behind Mr. Bryan and the little throng gathered about the machinery to see it in operation.

"Mr. Bryan, this is Mr. Nelson," said Lansing, introducing the president to his fellow worker. "You have heard me speak of him. I thought his achievement of such importance that no time should be lost in informing you of it."

Mr. Bryan extended his hand to Nelson.

"I am glad to meet you," he said, "and I hope that your invention will prove all that Mr. Lansing expects of it. He is quite a partisan of yours, though. He likes to sing your praises, Mr. Nelson."

The model was ready for its third test. Nelson switched on the current.

Mr. Bryan sat, watching it in operation, stroking his white mustache reflectively and peering with keen, blue eyes at the new cogs and rollers

fashioned under the direction of this mechanic who had crossed the North Carolina border to join his army of workers.

"We have given it two hours' work already," explained Lansing, "and have found no waste whatever. There is no lint in the air, as you may notice. That in itself means a great deal for the health of the operatives."

Mr. Bryan nodded.

An hour passed and Mrs. Lansing gathered her brood about her skirts and took them, tip-toeing, down-stairs and to bed. The three men were left together when the last of the cotton was fed the machine.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Nelson," said the mill president, as he prepared to depart. "Your new carding machine will make you a great deal of fame among millmen. It will make you a comfortable fortune also, I am sure, and it will benefit mill workers. It is a pleasure to me to think that one of my own men has accomplished this and I shall aid you all that I can in seeing that your patent rights are protected."

Lansing and Nelson saw Mr. Bryan to his machine and then went to the library.

"I hope we don't lose you when the money comes in," said Lansing.

"Lose me?" echoed Nelson with a smile. "This is my home and I hope to live and die here. I came here friendless and have found friends and fortune."

## CHAPTER XX

NELSON'S quiet, even grave demeanor, as he faced the promise of almost immediate wealth and success, caught the interest of Mr. Bryan, who realized that the machinist and inventor was high above the average in manhood and intellectual capacity.

On the other hand, Nelson felt that Mr. Bryan was a man of the highest integrity and that he could be trusted as a father would be trusted by his sons. The mill president lost no time in having Nelson's invention fully protected by patents. One of the wealthiest of Southern capitalists, it was a simple matter for him to call the attention of the manufacturers of mill machinery to the work of his employee. In due time, Nelson was called to the president's office and there met the representatives of the firm that would put his invention on the market.

For the right to manufacture and sell his improved carding machine Nelson was paid ten

thousand dollars cash and given a royalty on the sales.

When the transaction was closed and the money deposited in his bank, John Nelson felt that the dream of his prison days was beginning to materialize. The foundation of the fortune necessary for him to prosecute a world-wide search for the man for whose crime he had suffered was laid. Harried and hounded, he had never ceased to struggle, had never quailed and had never given up the hope that some day the black cloud cast over his life by the police would be lifted, and that from his hands would be washed the mock blood stain put upon them. His aim was higher than money and ease. To pile up a fortune was only a detail of the task before him. All his intelligence and patience would be tried when it came to spending that fortune in the effort to rid himself of the stigma of being James Montgomery, alias John Nelson, murderer and escaped convict.

His brain was already busy with the incubation of another inventive idea. His gait over the course to the cherished goal was made and there would be no flagging, no more than there had

been when he made his brave dash for liberty, and sweat and blood poured from him.

The Sabbath following the disposal of his patent rights was a day of serious and grateful contemplation to Nelson. He attended service with the Lansings and then shut himself in his room. Surely, he thought during his moments of introspection, the world is good and fair. Human institutions might work cruelly and some of those people who were designed to operate them might be bloodless and inhumane, but there seemed to be some mysterious guiding force that had led him to this beautiful little corner of the earth where the men were kind and just. He had been taken from under the wheels of the Jugger-naut of society, the Law, before the heart had been crushed out of him. A devout man, retaining the simple and beautiful faith of an old-fashioned mother, he attributed all this to the mercy of God.

His reflections were brought to an end by a call from Mrs. Lansing, informing him that Mr. Bryan wanted him on the telephone. He hastened to the instrument in the hall below and answered a pleasant greeting from the mill president.

"I have a letter from the people you signed with," Mr. Bryan informed him over the wires, "and they desire to know whether they may have an option on your second invention. They are greatly pleased with the outlook under your first contract and seem to think that you will do big things in time to come."

"The next one may be a failure," said Nelson, with a little laugh of pleasure at the praise given him.

"I would like to talk the matter over with you," suggested Mr. Bryan. "If you have nothing else to do, come over to supper. My car is handy; suppose I run over for you?"

"Thank you; I shall be glad to spend the afternoon with you."

"Better still," Mr. Bryan added, "get your things together and spend the evening with us. Then we can talk into the night and I'll take you in to the mills with me in the morning."

Nelson promised to be ready and left the instrument to pack his suit-case.

Mrs. Lansing, with motherly care, supervised the hasty packing, seeing to it that he forgot none of the essentials of toilet and that he carried

with him the best of his linen. Within half an hour Nelson was with the mill president in his motor, speeding over the hard, red clay roads toward his home.

The autumn was well advanced. The leaves and vines of the forests through which they traveled were touched with gold and bronze and crimson.

The Bryan home was in the center of a magnificent estate of a thousand acres, through which flowed a branch of the Saluda River. Its well-tilled fields had yielded their crops for the year and its granaries were filled. The sheen of sleek, blooded cattle showed in the sunlight in the little valley through which the stream wound with many graceful curves. In the distance, amid many majestic and ancient shade trees, the white pillars of the mansion gleamed.

The motor swung through a wide, garden gate and pulled up as cheerful cries of welcome came to the occupants from the family assembled on the piazza.

"Here we are!" cried Mr. Bryan, alighting from the car.

He ran up the piazza steps, Nelson following, to a stately woman with silvery hair.



“Mother,” he said, “this is our guest, Mr. Nelson. And this is my eldest boy, Jim,” went on Mr. Bryan, after Nelson had greeted his hostess. “He is just your age, I should think, Mr. Nelson. And here is Miss Molly Bryan, my daughter.”

Nelson turned from James Bryan to his sister and looked into a smiling, girlish face. To him her eyes seemed to be patches of blue clipped from the heavens. The sunlight of youth and a light heart was in them. Her hair was gold, fine spun and piled high on her shapely head. Her cheeks were rich in coloring, like the cheeks of English lassies, and her lips were sweet and full.

Although there lurked in her constant smile the coquetry that is the possession of all pretty girls of twenty, she had the grace of bearing of her mother, a wide brow and a chin that suggested strength of character and determination.

“I am glad to meet the famous Mr. Nelson,” she said pleasantly, as she studied his face for a moment. “We have heard father speak of your inventive work so often. He says that you are a wizard with machinery.”

Nelson felt his face grow hot. All that he had known of human affection was the great love

that his mother had given him and the dumb, animal-like devotion of the old convict who had helped him escape from Sing Sing. There seemed to be a caress in the limpid eyes of this lovely girl before him. His heart beat wildly within him; the warm touch of her hand sent a thrill through his whole being.

A strange feeling of exaltation came over him. It was as if he had journeyed for years through a parched and barren land and had come suddenly upon the dawn of a new day in a fair and smiling country. A joy so profound and pure that it left him speechless and amazed stirred in his breast. The faint line that separates the emotions that bring tears and smiles was drawn for him. Pain shot through his heart, as if an arrow had pierced it.

"I — I — didn't know that I had become famous," he managed to stammer.

She realized his bewilderment and from his eyes caught the confession that suddenly, swiftly and unexpectedly he had met the woman he was to love.

"Oh, but father knows all about machinery and he says that you are a wizard," she laugh-

ingly protested, the color in her cheeks deepening.

“Molly,” reproved the mother, “Mr. Nelson has not yet had time to get the dust of travel from him and here you are chaffing him already.”

The music of Molly’s laughter lingered in his ears as Nelson followed his host. As they passed through the wide entrance hall of the mansion, he saw to his left the great dining-room with its open fireplace, its stately mahogany, its wealth of silver and cut glass. In the hall were hung old portraits of the members of the family in days long gone. All about him was evidence of culture and refinement acquired by generations of training and right living.

“My boy, Jim, is a lawyer,” Mr. Bryan told Nelson. “We shall be busy on some other legal matters before we can take up the question of your next invention. I’ll leave you to the care of Molly. She is a great walker and I’ll warrant you that when she brings you back from a tour of the place you will have a splendid appetite for supper.”

At this prospect Nelson made his toilet with the eagerness of a boy and appeared on the piazza

in a few moments. Molly was waiting for him, eager for a tramp over fields and through woods and the opportunity to find out more of the nature of the grave, bearded, young inventor given in her charge for the afternoon.

## CHAPTER XXI

THE opening of John Nelson's heart to the first demand of love found it clean and unmarked by false passion. Its response to the mystically sent message from the soul of Molly Bryan was such as the heart of a boy makes when the pang of first love strikes him.

There was no thought of sex to obtrude itself and claim its creature-portion of a lover's paradise. The man's wholesome nature had been affected by only one other woman. The hands of a good mother had swept the strings of his heart and, as a lute suspended, it had vibrated even until now, when the second woman entered his life to fill it with music.

Walking at his side, over paths heavy with fallen leaves, the incense of fall wild flowers and the fast-gathering loam making sadly sweet the afternoon air of the waning autumn season, she seemed to him less of earth than heaven. The rustle of the crimson and golden leaves under their

feet drowned the soft sounds of her garments. He heard only her voice; he felt only the appreciation of the sanctity of her presence. To him she was a creature that God had fashioned after fashioning the lilies, the white of the petals and the gold of the stamens still upon His kindly hands to make pure her soul and gild her hair.

When he dared speak to her, he had to make an effort to keep his sonorous voice from trembling. She felt, instinctively, the effect that her nearness had upon the quiet, modest companion of her walk and Molly Bryan accepted with a feeling akin to awe the tribute it implied.

Her buoyancy of spirit was not the effervescence of a light mind but of a light heart, a heart that had never known sorrow or pain or sin. Her stately mother had lived at a time when Southern youth had enjoyed no frivolity. Four bloody years of awful strife, four years of the agony of suspense while a "Cause" was being fought out, four years of sewing for hospitals in the field and in the towns had brought the mother of Molly Bryan to womanhood and to wifeness and motherhood equipped as the mothers of Sparta were equipped.

Nelson would have been glad to have remained silent in the possession of these few first hours of her presence, and had she been as untrained and as uncouth as he was in the social demands, he would have let no word escape his lips.

Not knowing the depth of his nature and guessing nothing of the tragedy of his life, she attributed his taciturnity to shyness. She soon found a way to unloosen his tongue.

“It is glorious in the Indian Summer,” she said, as they paused to feast their eyes upon a mingling of gold and crimson leaves, “but in the spring it is even more beautiful through all this country. Before the snow disappears, the trailing arbutus is to be found on the mountainsides.”

The simple pleasures of the road, when he had traveled as a poor tinker in his flight from the North to this haven, had brought him the joyful knowledge of growing wild things. In the highways he had come to know the flowers and while resting in his enforced vagabondage he had found delight in random volumes of the poets, who had come to know the beauties of nature before him.

She lured him from his silence with questions about trees and flowers and brought from him his

simple praise of all that was so freely given to him who would but open his eyes and look about him with discernment. He had read among the poets of Israel that the earth was but the footstool of God. He quoted the passage and added that no finer brocade was ever designed or conceived than that made by the fields and the woods.

She listened to him eagerly and coaxed him with questions when he faltered and seemed suddenly conscious of the fact that he was actually talking to her.

The sun had gone across the mountains into the Tennessee country and beyond when they returned to the Bryan home. The candles were lighted in the old girandoles upon the walls of the dining-room and the logs of oak and hickory and pine, above a bed of gray ashes, were making the shadows dance fantastically at their feet.

The supper hour, with Molly seated at his side, the charm of a contented family circle and the hospitable attentions of Mr. and Mrs. Bryan put Nelson at ease.

“It will not be necessary to worry longer about the proposition of your manufacturers to secure an option on your next invention,” Mr. Bryan



told Nelson, as they left the table. "They sent along a contract and Jim has gone over it carefully. Jim thinks that it is very fair and that it will be to your advantage to close with them."

Nelson thanked his employer.

"It is a pleasure for me, Nelson," replied Mr. Bryan. "If your brains improve the cotton industry, you are not the only beneficiary. Every device that your science produces will bring benefit to all of us. God speed your work."

"I have hope of accomplishing a great deal more," Nelson told Mr. Bryan. They had made their way to the mill president's library and were seated about his hearth. "My work is my one pleasure in life," he continued. "I am only a beginner, but each year and the advantage of working in your splendid plant will give me equipment for serious efforts in invention."

"Your first invention has made you practically independent, so far as wages go," said Mr. Bryan, "and I must confess that I am a little disturbed on that account. I would like you to remain with us. In a very little while I may be able to offer you the general managership. New mills are to be built in the adjoining county and

Lansing and the present vice-president and general manager will be sent there to get them going."

"It is a very high compliment you pay me, Mr. Bryan," Nelson replied. "I had no intention of ever leaving Greenville. I hope that I shall be found worthy of your belief in my capacity."

The two chatted until bedtime, Mr. Bryan enjoying more than one cigar as he studied Nelson and coming to the conclusion that he would make no mistake in advancing him until he joined the board of directors of his company and became his right-hand man in the operation of the great plant under his care.

Molly came and kissed her father good night, paused to laugh and chat for a few seconds and departed, Nelson following her from the library and going to his room.

As she ascended the stairs, Molly paused to wave her hand to him and smile her good night. She held a lighted taper in one hand and shaded the flame from the draught with the other. The light shone on her pretty face as she smiled on the shadowy stair.

Nelson went to his room. Her thoughts must have followed him, for he seemed to feel her pres-

ence as he stood at an open window and stared out into the darkness. He was in love, deeply, wonderfully, tragically in love.

“What would he not do, what could he not do to gain her, to have her and to hold her through life and through death!” he said to himself. And yet, as he stood at the window, trying to master himself, he realized the barrier that separated them. If she came to him to share her life with his, she would enter a cloud without a silver lining.

In the records of the courts of the land he was written down as a convicted murderer. A price was upon his head! A human bloodhound was snuffing the world over for a scent that would fetch him to bay. The curse that was upon him would be spread with greater capacity for hurt to his wife and to their children and their children’s children.

There was one way and one way only to lead him to happiness. With the wealth he gathered he would prosecute a hunt for the real murderer. He felt that the time had come for him to set about this task. A large reward might aid in bringing about the capture of the man. But who

would offer it? Detectives might be employed in every city of the country to seek him out, but who would employ them? Menace most dreadful would be his the moment he stirred from the cover he had found in this peaceful mill city.

He sank in a chair, covered his face with his hands and fought to choke down the sobs that rose in his throat.

After all he was nothing but an escaped convict!

## CHAPTER XXII

**A**FTER his visit to the Bryans and his meeting with Molly, Nelson struggled heroically to put aside thoughts of love.

He sought to divert his mind by charitable work among the poor and ignorant of the millhands. The poverty and distress that come, especially to children, from shiftless and intemperate parents could not be eradicated by formal efforts. The company's free school dragged along in the doldrums, the children of the operatives preferring to work at the bobbins and their parents encouraging them to abandon their books. Few of the mill families put aside any of their earnings for rainy days.

Nelson began to give a part of each day to helping those who were in dire need, in seeing that the sick were healed and that the hungry were fed.

It was while on one of these little journeys, which he made secretly, that he again came in

contact with Molly Bryan. He found her struggling to straighten out the affairs of a family in one of the bleak little cottages provided for the workers. The father of the family had gone off with another woman. The mother had just added another baby to her already large brood and there was only the meager pay of the two oldest children to keep the wolf from the door.

He found Molly playing the part of a ministering angel in this misery-encumbered home. With one of her father's servants she had made the place clean, had brought flowers to the mother's room and food to the bare pantry. A physician had taken charge of the patient and the new baby, and the girl had paused to rest in her work of charity. She was flushed and tired as she sat with rather grimy hands in the living room. Her golden hair had tumbled about her ears and her skirts were still pinned high above her boot tops.

"Oh!" she cried in surprise, as Nelson entered the room.

He started back, astonished and embarrassed. "I beg your pardon, Miss Bryan," he apologized. "I did not know that you were here. I under-

stood that this family was in trouble and I came over to see what could be done."

"And so did I," she said. "I have just finished straightening out things. Turn around and look out of the door until I make myself presentable."

He wheeled about and she took the pins from her skirts and straightened her hair before a cracked and warped mirror.

"Now, you may turn around again," she said, going to him.

"You are tired," he suggested solicitously.

"Not very."

"Have you been here all the morning?"

"Yes; I give two days a week to the cottages, helping as much as I can those who need help."

He hesitated, questioning himself whether to tell her that he hoped to use some of his money in the same work.

"I thought that I would like to help, too, when such cases as this arose," he said finally.

"I shall take you as an assistant," she told him, looking up into his eyes. "I knew that you had a big heart the moment I saw you. What is there that made me think you a man of sacrifice?"

“ I — sacrifice? ” he asked.

“ Yes, something told me that you were the kind of man to lay down his life for his fellow creatures.”

“ I would like to help others as much as possible because, perhaps, I have been helped and cannot forget it,” he replied quietly.

“ I heard in another cottage that you had paid the fines of two brothers who had quarreled and had been arrested, and that you had made them go in peace together,” she said. “ Did you do that? ”

“ It was little to do.”

“ And I heard that you had pleaded for a young man who had been caught stealing and that the magistrate gave him another chance.”

“ The young man had an old mother to support and he might never make another mistake. Besides, if he had been locked up it would have been the helpless mother who would have suffered.”

She had placed a hand on his right arm as she catechized him.

“ I am afraid,” she said, standing close to him and looking him in the eyes, “ that I shall have



to be the assistant and you the Samaritan. I shall care for the ill and you shall ask forgiveness and help for the wretched and the sinful."

He touched her hand with his and pressed it ever so lightly.

"We should be going," he suggested. "It is very near the noon hour."

"I am to join father in his office and take him home to dinner," she said, as they left the cottage and the mill settlement. "Won't you come with us? I shall have father invite you."

"I am sorry but it is not possible to-day," he replied. "It is very kind of you, but I have much lost time to make up and I must go into the city on business."

They had come to a cross-road.

"I must go this way," he told her, pausing.

She looked disappointed.

His heart was beating fast and he could think of nothing commonplace enough to say. The wild surge of love that had come to him at the first glimpse of her face he experienced again.

She studied his face for a moment and saw that he was inwardly disturbed. She wondered if it was a return of his old shyness and then thought

that, perhaps, it was because he did not want to leave her.

“Good-by,” she said softly, extending her little gloved hand. He touched her fingers lightly and lifted his hat.

“Good-by,” he repeated.

“Tuesdays and Fridays are my days in the settlement,” she said over her shoulder, as she started off.

He stood in the road watching her until she disappeared around its first bend.

## CHAPTER XXIII

**A**LTHOUGH Nelson devoted every hour of the day for the next succeeding four months to perfecting a second invention, the winter proved a period of mental agony to him. His second invention was tested in due time and brought him an even larger financial reward than the first but, try as he might, he could not throw from him the great love that absorbed his soul. His thoughts dwelt upon Molly Bryan as he worked and his nights were filled with dreams of her.

At times he was perilously near casting the dice with Fate and declaring his love for her and asking her to be his wife. But when it seemed that the soul within him would parch and perish if he did not take that step, his brave nature asserted itself and he passed through the fire of affliction safely.

With a part of the money that began to flow into

his possession from royalties, as his machines were put on the market, he bought stock in the mills where he was employed. He was chosen a director of the company at its January meeting and Mr. Bryan took him into active coöperation in the direction of the management of the plant.

Neither the mill president nor his daughter could understand Nelson's avoidance of their home. That Nelson loved her Molly knew, with all the intuition of a sensible and sweet girl. That she had given him no reason to believe that he was otherwise than welcome she was equally certain.

It was perhaps the failure of John Nelson to press his suit that made the first feeling of tenderness and admiration she had for him turn quickly into genuine love. It is only that which is hard to grasp, that is denied for a long time, that makes hunger of soul or body.

Toward the end of winter a thing occurred that drove despair into Nelson's heart and made him decide immediately as to his future course.

Mr. Bryan entered his office in the mill and handed him a letter that had been opened. In the left-hand corner of the envelope was the seal of

the City of New York and the printed words: "Department of Police, New York City."

"You might read this for your own guidance, Nelson," said Mr. Bryan, "and then pass it along to the foremen of the various departments."

Nelson drew forth the letter, a mimeographed sheet, asking that a lookout be kept for James Montgomery, escaped convict and murderer, sentenced for life to Sing Sing. The man the police wanted was an expert machinist, was likely to apply for work anywhere in the industrial sections of the country, and then followed a minute description of feature and build of body.

The hound was still after the quarry.

"I'll look after it, Mr. Bryan," he managed to say.

"What's the matter to-day?" asked the president. "You look pale and worried."

"Nothing — nothing serious at any rate," replied Nelson.

"You are working too hard; better take it easy for awhile," advised Mr. Bryan. He paced the floor of his right-hand man's office for a moment, stroking his gray mustache.

"Look here, Nelson," he said, in a kindly half-

troubled tone, "something has been worrying you all winter. What is it? Tell it to me. I am your friend."

Nelson's face was as white as the snow on the ground outside.

It was not the caliber of the man to lie. If he had tried to lie he would have made a bungle of it.

"I can't tell you," he replied.

"Is it Molly?" asked Mr. Bryan.

Nelson did not reply. He could not.

"She thinks a great deal of you, my boy," said her father.

Nelson left his desk and stood before Molly Bryan's kindly father. A confession of his love for the daughter trembled on his lips. He felt that at any moment a torrent of words would pour forth from him and lay bare the whole tragic, terrible story hidden in his breast. Under the secret he carried, his heart lay like a stone. He would have given his left arm to have closed his office door and made his confession, but he had been hunted long enough to feel the sense of caution exert itself.

If he himself felt that he should not ask Molly Bryan to enter the cloud that encompassed him

and his future, surely her father would not give his assent. On the other hand, there was a chance that his rapidly accumulating wealth would prove the means of some day dispelling that cloud.

"Mr. Bryan," he said simply, "I can't tell what is my trouble. I can only tell you that whatever happens I came to you as a poor young man without a blot on his conscience, without having done harm to any one, and that I would rather suffer alone than have others suffer with me."

"I hate to think of a young man having such brilliant prospects being a man of sorrow," said the mill president. "Your secret is yours and if it is eating away your heart it gives me pain to think of it. I will gladly share any affliction put upon you if it does not dishonor you or your friends."

Mr. Bryan returned to his office and Nelson tore into tiny bits the police circular. He would have to go away. There were two reasons. The hound was near the quarry; his plight was bringing sadness to the woman he loved. Not more than a score of miles beyond his office window the boundary lines of South Carolina tapered between North Carolina and Tennessee, making a moun-

tainous corner. There, few of the people could read. The questions they asked were about the weather and the scant crops of corn from which they illicitly distilled enough whiskey to provide them with money for clothes and medicine. Their habitat was called the Dark Corner.

He would withdraw into its shadows. Perhaps, after a few years, he could come out of the wilderness with safety and find Molly Bryan waiting for him. It was sweet for him to think that any one would wait his coming.

At first the scheme seemed visionary, but careful study of it convinced him that it was not only a plausible plan but the safest he could devise. He would buy a number of acres and build himself a home and a workshop. His determination to devote all his energies to invention for a number of years was logical and would furnish the necessary explanation.

That night he told Lansing of his plan.

"I am going to get away from everywhere for a year or so," he said to Lansing, in the latter's study. "All my time shall be devoted to experimental work. The money from my two inventions is constantly increasing. I shall use it



to build a home and a workshop in the mountains."

Lansing was machinist and student enough to realize the demands insisted upon by creative effort, and he gave his approval to the plan.

In the spring, while the snow still lay upon the ground in shady places, Nelson attacked the wilderness with a gang of workmen. He had bought five hundred acres in the Dark Corner. Here he lived in a shanty with his workers, as they made a clearing and he directed the blasting and cutting of rock from the unscarred sides of the mountains for his foundations.

When his castle in the Dark Corner neared completion, he journeyed back to Greenville, arriving there in the night. He timed himself so that he caught an express train north. In a distant city, the next day, he wrote and enclosed with a one dollar certificate this personal, addressed to the business office of The Herald in New York:

"Bill — Greenville — 19 — 3 — Kid."

The number nineteen meant the nineteenth letter of the alphabet, "S," and the number three meant the third letter, "C."

Of all the men in the world there was but one

that he felt he could surely trust, one that fully believed him, one that would come and help him, and this man with the succor he called for now was a convict.

The numbers gave Bill Hawkins all the directions necessary to guide him to the boy who had brought something worth while into his life, — kindness and helpfulness.

## CHAPTER XXIV

NELSON'S castle in the Dark Corner took shape rapidly. It rose two-and-a-half stories above a basement of rock. From the upper windows he was given a clear view of every point of the circle where sky and earth met. The outside was painted a neutral color, so that only a keen pair of eyes at a distance would have picked out the habitation amid the surrounding shade trees.

The high basement was planned for kitchen, servants and storage purposes. The first floor was arranged for his workshop, the floor above for his living quarters, and the top or half-story was to remain closed against every human hand save that of Nelson.

There was gossip among the machinists and laborers who uncrated the masses of steel and iron that had been hauled over the mountain roads, for among the things that were not deposited on the laboratory floor were certain weights with leather

clasps about the thickness of a man's ankle. There were also iron bars and affairs of rope and polished wood that looked like the trapezes and gymnastic apparatus used in the circus. These things were placed at the foot of the stairs leading to the attic. There was a heavy lock to the door and the master of the strange mountain castle never parted with the key.

A small electric plant was installed to provide power for his shop and lighting.

Built against one side of the castle was a cement garage, in which was kept a motor of powerful build and finest engines. It had been constructed especially to stand the strain of broken mountain roads and carried a huge gasolene tank and a place for provisions.

The garage could be entered from the castle by means of a door of masked design, which showed neither casing nor knob. A hidden spring opened and closed it.

As if seeking to get all the sunlight possible, the house that John Nelson built was of many windows, and each was in the deep French style. Every window was, in fact, a door. It was a house of many exits.

In a separate clearing, Nelson built a house for his servants and installed in it a negro, his wife and his strapping black son. He gave this family a piece of land to till and provided them with light and fuel and wages.

Furniture, bedding, equipment in abundance for his workshop and stores were taken within the castle and the last of the workmen departed.

Employing the mountain people as laborers, Nelson patched the roads until he felt that he could use the full power of his heavy motor in traversing them, if it became necessary to tax its speed. He had promised Mr. Bryan to remain in an advisory capacity as the vice-president of his mills, and to keep this promise he stretched from pine to pine a private telephone wire between his castle and the office and home of the mill president.

He started his hermit life with two things before him besides his work as a mechanical inventor. One was to wait the coming of Bill Hawkins, to whom he would entrust the task of seeking in the underworld the murderer of the watchman of the West End bank in New York. The other was

to prepare himself to face the day, should it ever come, when a man from Mulberry Street would confront him and charge him with being James Montgomery.

Recollections of his five years in Sing Sing beset him at regular intervals. A moment of gazing from a window at the wide expanse of sky and rolling mountains, the sound of the wind in the trees, and the bedtime hour when he found his couch soft and sweet with fresh linen would bring back to him thoughts of the other thing he had passed through: the absence of horizon, the barred door of a cell at night, the tramping feet of a thousand and a half caged men, the day's toil in silence, the hideous faces of criminals being crowded into deeper degeneracy by incarceration, and the sentence of the court that he should remain in such plight until death.

He told himself that he would never be taken back to it alive. His good, capable, well-ordered brain had mapped out a careful course. Should the bloodhounds of the law come upon him in this place he had built for final refuge, he would make his fight to pass them.

During his visits to Greenville he cashed checks

paid him for royalties on his inventions until he secured ten thousand dollars in certificates of denominations he could use anywhere.

If flight became necessary, he would go through the masked door to his high-powered machine. Its great oil tank was always filled, its tires ever kept in the best condition, and stowed away under the seat were provisions and a flask of water. Unless he was shot down in his tracks or surprised and overpowered suddenly, he could defy pursuit through the wild country about him.

Each morning he passed through the door to the attic stairs and locked it behind him. For an hour he worked with the weights and bars, changing his measurements slowly but surely. The fraction of an inch in the length of arm or leg would discredit the Bertillon record made of him and filed in the Bureau of Identification at police headquarters in New York. He gave many an hour of agony to achieve this and his face was chalky white when he left the attic and locked its door behind him each day.

With the anxiety and the hard work in his laboratory, a touch of gray came to his hair and beard. He looked a man of forty-five, save

when he smiled, but the purity and goodness of his nature shone forth in his countenance.

More money came to him as the foreign rights of his inventions were disposed of, and he cast about him for an opportunity to put it in use for others. He employed as many of the sturdy mountaineers as he could in road work, paying them good wages. He patched their cabins, provided medicines for their sick, and blankets and stout clothes for the women and children.

The scattered families of these poor people looked up to him with mingled wonder and gratitude. When time rid them of their childlike timidity, they came to know him and to love him.

In cell and in workshop, on the highway or in farmhouse, Nelson exerted a silent power for good because of the good that was in him. To the Dark Corner he came as a veritable shaft of sunlight from heaven.



## CHAPTER XXV

**T**HERE is no statute of limitations for an escaped convict. He is always legitimate quarry.

Nearly ten years had passed since James Montgomery was brought before the desk of Inspector Ranscombe at police headquarters in Mulberry Street.

Ten years! The first decade of a man's majority, the heart of his life, the time when character shapes, when the soul is nascent, when the heart swings into responsive beat to all that is fine and beautiful or to all that is the reverse, and when the things of childhood disappear in a mist and the emotions and affections of manhood take their place.

There had been changes at headquarters in that time. The administration of the city was in other hands. The police department had gone through the throes of more than one shake-up

and there had been several police commissioners.

Ranscombe had been relieved of his important post as the chief of the city's little army of plain-clothes men, but he had played the game of department politics well and had won his way back to the Central Office. The fight had rattled his fast drying bones for a short while, had interested him and in the end had given him fresh interest in life. He went back to his job all the keener for his task.

On his return he found Detective Lieutenant Mike Kearney, stolid, emotionless, waiting for an assignment to a case, as usual. The inspector knew his value and had him promoted to the grade of captain. He assigned Kearney to take charge of the homicide squad.

With this advancement Kearney reached the climax of his career. He could go no higher. Politics did not interest him. There was nothing of the diplomat in his make-up. He would have made a poor inspector, for his natural instinct of ferreting would have compelled him to lower his nose to the trail of every criminal at large, and he would have become bewildered by the

maze of tracks and scents. He would have tried to do all the work himself, leaving nothing for his subordinates.

But with only the homicide cases to look after, he was capable of holding himself in leash to some extent. He could live, sleep and dream murder. The men under him were the pick of the seven hundred and more detectives of the department. They work hardest, because in murder cases there is honor and glory. The more atrocious and puzzling a murder mystery, the more fame in the public prints for the sleuths tracking the criminal and sending him to the chair.

Kearney started out in his new post with a slate clean, save for one inscription — the number 60,108.

Those numerals were burned in his brain. They represented the only case in his entire career when he had been foiled, when ingenuity, luck or whatever it was, had played successfully against his dogged and remorseless method of pursuit. He felt that he was being cheated every day that the escaped convict enjoyed life outside of Sing Sing's walls.

Had Montgomery been a thief, a forger or a

bigamist, he could have turned the matter over to his inspector, as a case still pending. But he had been convicted of murder and his case properly belonged in the Homicide Bureau.

Gradually Kearney got the affairs of the bureau working to suit him, and he could pause and give some study to the Montgomery matter.

The annual summer crime wave had subsided and with the coming of cool weather, men ceased to see red; instead of the resort to knife, pistol or poison, enmities ended with a curse or a sneer. The fever of disordered brains subsided. The Homicide Bureau was in for a dull period.

Captain Kearney's mind turned from the evil corners of the metropolis to the walled city up the Hudson. Time had changed the prison staffs throughout the State. There was a new superintendent of prisons and a new warden at Sing Sing. Kearney's old enemy, the warden who had frowned on his third degree methods with Convict Number 60,110, had been retired to private life.

Kearney called up the new warden and asked for an appointment the next time he came to the city. The warden was even then about to start

for town, and he would drop in at headquarters.

Within two hours the guardian of Sing Sing's population was seated beside Kearney's desk.

"I gotta case," explained the detective, "that I'm anxious to clean up. Ten years ago I sent a young feller named Montgomery to Sing Sing for murder in the second. He was put away for life. Five years ago, before you got on the job, he escaped. A crook named Hawkins, his cell-mate, helped him to get out. The old warden turned me down hard when I tried to put the screws to Hawkins. Now, I gotta scheme." He paused to get the full attention of the warden.

"As I dope it out from the records," he went on, "this convict Hawkins has served two-thirds of his term. I want him turned out, but I don't want him to know that I had anything to do with it. I'll have a shadow put on him the moment he leaves prison, and if he joins that young feller he helped get out, I'm gonna get the 'lifer' and put him back where he belongs. D'yuh get me?"

"I gotcha."

"You can fix it?"

"Easy."

"After Hawkins flushes the bird for us, and we get the real game, then we can lay back and watch Hawkins. He'll go back to his old tricks and soon we'll have him back where he belongs."

The warden nodded approval, a smile of admiration playing about his lips.

"The Probation Board is now in session," he said, with a laugh. "We'll turn him out as an act of mercy and in the hope that he will reform and make a good citizen."

"I'll get a couple of shadows up there in the morning," Kearney told him. The warden departed and Kearney closed his desk and started for dinner in his mother's little flat in Oliver Street.

The more he thought of the plan to use Hawkins to unconsciously betray his friend the more he liked it. He would leave a lieutenant in charge of his bureau for a few days and take the trail himself in the hope that it would lead speedily to the game he wanted.

## CHAPTER XXVI

**T**HE silent influence of five years with a man who prayed to his God morning and night and kept a brave heart in his bosom, although he was suffering bitter injustice, had a lasting effect on Bill Hawkins.

The old burglar had come to look upon James Montgomery as if he were his own son grown to manhood, and this affection, which had grown within him gradually, drove bitterness from his heart. It was as if the tragedy of his own life had been veiled by a kindly hand. Had he been as brave as this lad he had helped to reach freedom, had he been blessed with such a mother as Montgomery had, and had he been taught to pray and put his trust in God, the tragedy of his son's death and of his wife's bitter fate might never have come about.

As the days passed in Sing Sing and the boy was not brought back to his cell, Bill found his spirits

gradually brightening. He had accomplished something in life, bound though he was and held within walls of stone and steel.

He learned to conform to the prison regulations and his new course of conduct was not without its good effect. His red disc was gone forever, of course, but he could still win chevrons and turn them into stars of honor with each five years of exemplary behavior.

In the cutting room, the "Butcher" still kept a good record and received the benefits thereof in letters and newspapers. As they worked over their tailoring, the two talked with the deaf and dumb alphabet and Bill kept in daily touch with the personal column of the Herald.

The message finally came and Bill was signalled by the "Butcher" to stand by to receive it. He quickly comprehended the use of the numbers and knew that he would find Montgomery in Greenville, S. C.

As if Fate had determined to make up for all the bad luck of the past with one happy surprise, Bill was summoned before the Probation Board that very day.

He had four red chevrons on his sleeve and that



was something worth while for a one-time rebellious, third-term man to show.

Bill entered the trial room, walking as if in a dream. He knew of no outside effort to gain his release but he knew also that for four years he had walked as straight a line as ever a convict walked. He saw the chairman fingering some papers at a table about which sat the other members of the Board.

Bill's old thatch was now as white as snow. Ten years after the mid-century mark leave heavy traces. His eyes seemed set even deeper in his head and his high cheek-bones seemed to jut out further. But his tightly closed lips made a firmer mark than they had when he started his third term for burglary. The expression of cunning and craftiness was gone from his features. The jaw was still heavy and low set and the brow sloped, but there was the faint light of regeneration in his face. He was an old man and a somber streak in life's harlequinade but he was no longer crooked and ugly. He was a creature with a soul regained.

"Number 60,110," he heard the warden say, "has been a splendid prisoner for the last four

years. He is getting old and it looks as if he might straighten out if given a chance."

Bill did not know the motive back of this utterance of a truth that was blessed to him. He stood silent before his judges.

"If you are released on probation, will you try to be worthy of the chance given you and will you report to the Board once every month by letter?" the chairman asked.

"Yes, sir," he replied, his voice trembling as he began to realize that the prison garb was about to drop from him.

"We have studied your case and think it worth while to give you a trial," the chairman told him. "That is all."

He was free! It was hard for him to understand. A miracle had been wrought, it seemed to him. Kindness, mercy, compassion had been offered him, a thief. There must have been truth in that story he heard told in chapel about Christ's promise of heaven to the two thieves who had been crucified for their crimes.

Dazed and spiritually troubled, the old man walked to his cell. He heard the whistle blow for work to cease in the shops. He heard it, but he

did not move to the barred door of his cell. It was time to wash up for dinner, but the thought of food brought revulsion. He wanted the feel of the outside air. He would stand in the road and throw back his head and drink in the breath of free and living things. He did not answer at the mess formation and a guard came to his cell.

Bill explained that he had been granted probation and that he was a free man. He could not eat; he was not well.

The mess line marched off without him, the dead-sounding tread of the prisoners' feet echoing through the tiers. Bill stood in his cell, his arms folded and his chin on his breast.

He had not asked for mercy and yet it was given him! What would he find outside? No one was interested in him. Yes, the boy, Jim, was.

Did the boy bring about his deliverance? Surely, with a life term hanging over his head, he could not have reached out from his hiding place and opened the gates of Sing Sing.

Perhaps it was the God the boy used to pray to morning and night. Perhaps Jim had been praying for him and He had heard his prayers.

The awakening soul of Bill Hawkins leaped to

the beautiful thought. His knees trembled and he sank upon them beside his iron cot. His head fell in his hands, and he prayed. Indeed he prayed, for his eyes were wet with the tears of gratitude.

## CHAPTER XXVII

**H**AWKINS had come to Sing Sing with nothing but his sins and his sentence of fifteen years. He carried away with him a sense of thankfulness, a thing he had never experienced before.

The cynicism of the case-hardened criminal dropped from him as the baggy gray suit dropped from him. The tears that had come to his eyes during that last hour in his cell had washed them clear of the old baleful glitter of protest and resentment.

Let the soul shine from the windows of a man with a prognathous jaw, a sloping brow and long arms and he will confound the theories of a Lombroso. Let patience and dignity and suffering show in a face however ugly and the mere contour means nothing. Patriots, priests, saints have been as ugly and, at the same time, as beautiful as this old burglar who left the office of the warden of Sing Sing, saying to his deliverer:

"As God is my judge and helper, I'll live the life of a decent man."

The warden shook his hand and made a pretence of beaming upon him. He little knew what good had come from his base share in the plan of Detective Michael Kearney to use one friend to betray another.

The probationer's gray suit was changed for a new black one and a felt hat was pulled over his forehead, hiding the defective formation. In his pocket was enough money to take him whence he came — the morass of humanity, the underworld of New York. He would return there because no other world would have him, but he would return a different man.

He was not going forth to evangelize. He was going to seek the woman who had been a pretty girl once, the woman who had suffered ten thousand times what he had suffered, the creature upon whom had fallen all the bitter misery that could be heaped upon wife and mother, not because she had been a thief but because her man had stolen.

Never mind what had happened to her, she was his wife. He was no member of polite society

and polite society's hollow code was unknown to him, a publican and sinner. She was the woman who had taken him when other women had turned from him with fear and revulsion. She was the woman who had been patient and kind to him through poverty and through poverty's ultimate condition, drunkenness and despair.

If what Kearney had told him so brutally, when he had tried to bribe him, was true, it made no difference. The boy in his cell had uttered a solemn truth to which humanity stops its ears — it wasn't her fault.

The once broad and massive shoulders of Hawkins were bent. He walked as if carrying a burden from the prison gates. Even the glory of the soft autumn morning could not bring springiness to his limbs. But as he trudged up the road toward Ossining station, he removed his felt hat to feel the kiss of the clean air. The sun struck his silvery hair, making it shine and seem as a halo.

He had elected to remain in the prison the night before so that he could begin his new life with the freshness of the morning. He walked slowly away from the tomb to the land of the

living. His eyes were strained by the width of the new vision of broad river and horizon beyond. But he regained his sense of perspective quickly, for he had been thrice caged and thrice thrown out into the world.

After ten years of the miasma of sixteen hundred cooped-up humans, the fragrance of the breezes that swept across river and field made his nostrils distend and tremble.

As he made his way through the Cabbage Patch section of the prison town, he would occasionally pause to watch the children playing in the road and their mothers pottering about little front yards, caring for tiny and dusty beds of fall flowers.

Finally he came to the steep road leading to the station and made his way down the hill. The rush of commuters, city-bound, was already under way. The rich traveled in automobiles and carriages with fine, well-fed horses. The little multitude of clerks and strugglers after the belly-need trooped by him in fast strides, every minute of their time being measured off for each performance of the day.

The old burglar felt the thrill of their endeavor. However little they might win with their aims,



their efforts and their ambitions, that little was surely sweet if fairly won. They shouted morning greetings to each other. The women laughed and chatted together as they sailed along in little clumps of femininity.

Styles had changed mightily since last his eyes rested upon the form of a woman. He found himself wondering at their manner of garb. They were all dressed as little girls, it seemed to him. Their short and tight skirts, their wide flower-and-feather-trimmed hats, their stout shoes, the tops showing, and their quick, spruce steps created in him a mild amusement.

At the station he bought a ticket to New York and boarded the first train. Two men of all the crowd seemed to notice him. One of these got aboard the train directly behind him while the other entered the coach he had chosen by the opposite door.

The train was an express and they were soon at Forty-second Street, where, in the swarm of thousands of men and women, many coaches were unloading to the station platforms.

Shorter of stature than the average in the teeming crowd, the head of Hawkins disappeared in

a sea of hats and bonnets, but the two men who had come with him from Ossining were never more than ten feet away from him.

Leaving the Grand Central Station, Hawkins struck to the east and boarded a downtown Third Avenue Elevated train. He went all the way to Park Row.

In one of the more widely read of the penny newspapers he sought a means of finding the woman he wanted. He entered the Park Row newspaper office and, counting his cash, found that he had two dollars and some odd change. He inquired of a clerk and found that a "personal" would cost him one dollar. He was given a pencil and an advertisement blank.

His heart was crying out for the woman who was lost in this teeming city of five millions. Could he utter his cry in ten words? Could ten words tell her the change that had come to him, inform her that he had left the old life forever, that he had come to take her in his arms and comfort her and shelter her from further hurt and harm?

For nearly an hour he labored over the task and finally was compelled to ask the help of the clerk.

He told the young man that he wanted to find his wife. The personal was written and paid for, and Bill departed.

As the probationer reached the sidewalk, the two men who had followed him separated. One kept on his heels and the other, with a look of triumph in his eyes, hurried inside and to the advertising clerk. He showed a police badge.

"I'm Captain Kearney of Central Office," he said briskly, "and I want to glimpse the personal the old man just left with you."

The clerk produced it.

Kearney read it slowly: "Jennie Hawkins. — Send address this office. Want you, my wife."

The detective uttered a growl of disappointment as he handed back the slip of paper.

"Hell," he said to himself, "I thought he was tipping Montgomery that he was out and that the trail would be a short one."

He turned to the clerk again.

"Soon as you get an answer to that personal," he instructed the young man, "telephone headquarters and ask for Captain Kearney. If I ain't there the message will be delivered me. See?"

## CHAPTER XXVIII

**I**T is one of the palpable and grotesque facts in the game of hide and seek between the denizens of the underworld of New York and the men of Central Office that the plain-clothes man is as surely marked with his profession of ferret as the traffic squad man is made evident by his uniform and puttees.

The New York detective is conspicuous by his commonplace garments, his derby or short-brimmed felt hat, his forced nonchalance, his hands, which seem always to get in his way and to bother him, and his feet, which are generally conspicuous to a painful degree.

If he is shadowing a man, he tries to affect the air of a stranger, looking curiously about when his quarry pauses or turns to spot him. If he is engaged in pumping a crook over their whiskey and water he indulges too greatly in the thieves' slang and displays a cunning that is unwonted among thieves. He does not possess and cannot

possess, because of his inexperience, that thing which the old criminal has — the “Know.” There is no other name for this psychic possession of the criminal, and criminological psychologists have not gone so far in their studies and experiments as to even realize its existence.

The “Know” in the hunted man is the same instinct which all animals that have become objects of prey have developed. A lamb might be devoured by a wolf in sheep’s clothing but not a fox. The criminal senses his enemy. Although he may look the stolid brute, he is, in reality, a creature of highly nervous organization. He is ever on the alert, sleeps lightly, treads softly and swiftly, and is argus-eyed. His ears are cocked for the faintest sounds and his mind wide open for the faintest hint of danger. It is only when he becomes sodden with drink that he loses these naturally developed gifts of the hunted.

Hawkins moved from the respectable, newspaper end of Park Row to that section of the same iron-pillared and track-covered highway which melts into the Bowery. He had but little money and he was hungry.

For five cents he could have entered one of a

hundred and more saloons, had a glass of beer and his fill of beans, bread and corned beef. But he had learned his lesson from drink and he passed these places, choosing a cheap restaurant, after carefully studying the prices of its various dishes displayed on a frame of dirty white oil-cloth in black letters.

He found a seat in the rear of the place facing the door.

Kearney's man had entered behind him and was seated with his back to him. But he faced a mirror, and he could see every move of the old probationer he was shadowing.

The eyes of Hawkins shifted about the restaurant, taking in the dirty walls, tawdry pictures, faded artificial flowers and the little signs proclaiming special dishes and their prices. For only a second his eyes rested on the mirror, but it was long enough.

Of the people crowded in the little place all save one were busy reading the first editions of the afternoon papers, eating or talking with one another. The one exception was looking upward into the mirror and Hawkins knew why, instinctively.

"A bull," he said to himself.

The glance at the mirrored face was enough to impress it on his mind. If this detective was shadowing him and not some other man, Hawkins would know it in just a little while.

He ordered a plate of ham and beans and a cup of coffee. Bread was served with it — three thin slices. He ate with a good appetite and paid the waiter fifteen cents from his little store of money.

It had been his intention to go to the Herald office and insert a reply to the personal from Montgomery. He left the restaurant and continued his way north on the Bowery to Third Avenue. He went as far as Twenty-third Street and turned west.

At Fourth Avenue he entered the Metropolitan building arcade, which runs through to Madison Avenue and Madison Square. He had not as yet turned about to make an attempt to find the shadow and Kearney's man was congratulating himself on having struck an easy job.

Once in the arcade of the building, Hawkins increased his gait until he came to the wide Madison Avenue entrance. Here the storm doors had been put up in readiness for coming winter and the heavy weather of the late fall. He pushed through

the door but instead of continuing into the Avenue he completed the circle and was back in the arcade. He retraced his steps, passing and recognizing the shadow, went to a boot-black stand and calmly took a chair.

The shadow, surprised, at first thought that this was a ruse of the man he was stalking to avoid him, but when he saw Hawkins take the chair he stood off and, under cover, told himself that his task was still a simple one.

As a Greek boy rubbed and polished his shoes Hawkins pondered how best to proceed next. Had Kearney not uncovered his hand in the attempt to bribe him to betray his friend, he would have been puzzled to fathom the meaning of this shadowing. Now, he understood why he had been released from prison and why his steps were being dogged. It was not mercy and kindness that had been the motive of his deliverance. It was police craft. Nevertheless, the old man lost none of his sense of gratitude for having been made free again. However sinister the purpose of those who had brought about his liberation, he was out on probation and to stay out as long as he violated no law.



The problem before him was to gain that probation by his own honest effort and not by being made a Judas. His knowledge of detective methods, gained in evil days, now stood him in good stead for a good cause. He knew that some time during the late afternoon or night his shadow would be relieved by another. If necessary, the man following him would arrest him as a suspicious character, take him to a station and hold him just long enough to have his relief look him over from under cover and then follow him. That he would not be held for long, he knew very well. The police wanted him free so that he could make his way to his friend and guide them to their quarry.

He was concerned chiefly in getting in print the reply to Montgomery's personal. To manage this best he would return to his old associates of the underworld. Unwritten, the words of the brief message would be passed along until they reached the Herald office and found their way to type and eventually to the man they were intended for.

His shoes were polished. He paid the Greek boy and returned to the Bowery with his shadow.

## CHAPTER XXIX

**H**AWKINS entered the "reading room" of a lodging-house just north of Chatham Square. One table, littered with cast-off newspapers and three or four old and well-thumbed magazines, was in the center of the room. Around the walls were ranged chairs placed as closely together as the seats on the average New York park bench.

As he fumbled among the papers, his keen eyes swept the faces of the down-and-outs who had been able to pay for the shelter they would have during the coming night.

Kearney's man followed him into the room after a minute, pulled a newspaper from his pocket and found a seat near a window.

The probationer expected some one, but he was not among the men gathered here. He took a paper and found a seat in the same row with the detective.

Without craning his neck and leaning forward the detective could not watch Bill's movements. Still, there was no way for Bill to leave the room without being seen by him, and the detective was satisfied with their relative positions.

The "Butcher," beside whom the probationer had worked in the cutting room, had told him to seek this spot if he needed any help. Generally about noon the "Butcher's" friend "Boston Ed" Fallon came there to get his mail and read the papers after breakfast. A part of Ed's duties in life was to keep up the underground communication between the outside world and the convicts in Sing Sing. It was he who had sent in the cash with which Montgomery was staked when he made his getaway. Bill would know him by a birthmark under his drooping left eye.

The noon hour passed tediously for Kearney's man, but comfortably for Bill. He read paper after paper, enjoying every line of the news of the world from which he had been shut off so long. All the while, his keen ears and his quick eyes were ready in case the "Butcher's" friend entered the room. He was in no hurry to eat again. One meal a day would be enough until he found work.

With plenty of water, which would cost him nothing, he could go on half a meal a day.

Toward one o'clock "Boston Ed," a middle-aged man, dressed as a laborer, entered the room and went to the table, where he fumbled among the papers and sized up the other guests and "sponges" of the Chatham Square lodging house. He uncovered the headquarters man in a glance from under his heavily-lidded eyes and flashed a signal with a look to Bill, whose eyes he saw peering knowingly at him from over his paper.

Bill's fingers began to move and, without appearing to look his way, the "Butcher's" birth-marked friend read a message in the deaf and dumb language, telling him to stand by for a talk.

He chose a paper and a seat, placing the table between him and Kearney's man. With his hands in his lap, "Boston Ed" could work his fingers without the detective reading his messages, should he, by chance, know the sign code.

Had the man-hunter the skill, intelligence and experience of the hunted, he would not have allowed himself to be made a point in a triangle so skilfully drawn to his disadvantage.

"The 'Butch' sent me," signalled Bill. "I'm just out."

"Is the bull shadowing you?" asked Ed's fingers.

"Yes."

"What's doing?"

"He's following me to find an escape."

"What you want?"

"Get a personal in the Herald for me."

"Shoot it."

"Here it is: 'Kid. — O. K. December. — Bill.'"

"I got you."

"Repeat it."

"'Kid. — O. K. December. — Bill.'"

"I'm broke."

"I'll pay."

"Thanks."

"What you doing next?"

"Try to shake the shadow."

"Then what?"

"Hunt for my wife, Jennie Hawkins. Advertised for her but the bulls will watch the newspaper offices."

"Jennie Hawkins?"

"Yes."

"Are you Bill Hawkins?"

"Yes."

The man with the birthmark smiled and pretended to read his paper for a moment.

"Bill," he resumed.

"Yes?"

"Shake the bull and meet me in Corlear's Hook Park. I'll take you to her."

Bill's hands dropped in his lap. He paled and then flushed.

Was he to find Jennie so easily? He could hardly believe it. And how would he find her? Had she another man? Was she true to him? But there was a pleasant smile playing about the lips of the birthmarked man that hinted of good news.

"How is she?" he asked.

"Fine and a good woman."

"Thank God," said Bill to himself and then, with his fingers: "I'll meet you in Deefy's saloon. When?"

"Any night between ten and twelve."

Bill rose from his seat and left the room, his shadow at his heels.

## CHAPTER XXX

**H**AWKINS had the entire afternoon in which to wear out the patience of his shadow.

He walked south on the Bowery to Park Row once more and stood leaning on a railing at the brink of the excavations for the new Municipal Building near the old Brooklyn bridge. He watched the antlike droves of men digging in the great hole for an hour.

The shadow was hungry by that time and his heels were feeling the wear and tear of the trail, but Bill's only pause for refreshment was made under the bridge, where he gulped a three-cent glass of milk.

The doors of Father Evers' little red church in Duane Street were open and the old probationer entered and found quiet and peace for an hour, as he half knelt in a pew. He felt as if he wanted to pray and the desire itself was a prayer of profound sincerity and beauty.

He had nothing to ask of his Master save His continued mercy. He had much to be grateful for; his deliverance from prison and the joyful news that his wife was a good woman and not the fallen creature Kearney had said she was.

The hour of solemn thought in this little temple in the heart of busy, downtown New York refreshed him mightily and when he left the little red church it was with a lighter heart and a lighter step.

Hawkins made his way to West Street and the North River wharves. Although he was old and bent, he still had abundant strength in his long arms and in his massive shoulders. He went from pier to pier looking for a chance to put in a couple of hours at work. He found the chance at the foot of Warren Street, where he was given three hours' work unloading trucks.

The old probationer pulled off his coat and folded it carefully. He rolled up his sleeves and went at the task before him. The shadow stood off in the distance, wearing out his heels and his patience and counting the minutes to the time when he might conscientiously devise a means of getting relief.



At half-past five o'clock Hawkins was paid one dollar by his foreman. He slipped into his coat and started away to give the hound behind him a chance to show his ability in shadowing.

The rush hour was on and Manhattan's millions were packing subways, elevated and surface cars, and crowding the bridges. The skyscrapers gushed forth seemingly endless streams of humanity. The sidewalks overflowed and the streets were filled from curb to curb. Below ground, the subway platforms were crowded, until those on the edges were in constant peril.

Broadway, Nassau, William, Spruce, Fulton and Broad, Exchange Place, Wall and the other narrow highways in the financial district all contributed to the jam that found an outlet in the space in front of the World and Tribune buildings.

Into this space, filled with flocking men and women, Hawkins made his way, dodging to right and left as he traveled across the northward current. His shadow had to close in on him to keep him in sight. They were not more than three feet apart when Hawkins entered the World building.

The fox passed through the building to North

William Street and disappeared in the gloom of the third riverward arch of the old bridge. The hound plunged after him. They emerged from under the bridge at Rose Street and the fox turned south to Frankfort Street. Turning to the east, he started as if for the river, hanging close to the bridge arches. Suddenly the fox disappeared!

The hound had just left Rose Street and had turned east also. Not seeing his quarry, he hurried his steps, keeping his eyes shifting from one side of Frankfort Street to the other.

Two of the great arches of masonry were bricked in for storage purposes. The third was open.

The hound peered into the fast-gathering shadows and at the other end of the arch noticed a building. It looked like a blind alley but it was not. He was peering into a veritable appendix of the city's system of highways. It was Hague Street, a short, twisted path about which property had been laid out when New York was New Amsterdam. It ran like the letter "S" from the bridge arch to Pearl Street, which is as crooked as the crookedest Tammany politician.

The fox knew the ground, the old "Swamp"

section, where are the places of business for the hide and leather merchants, where there is always the disagreeable smell of wet hides and rotting hairs and where the buildings are old-fashioned.

The hound gave a last glance up and down Frankfort Street and then plunged into Hague. He ran to the end of the arch and saw a short and sharp curve. He ran to the bend of this and saw the second curve. He ran to the bend of the second curve and saw Pearl Street, twisting like a python, crowded with homeward-hurrying thousands and made darker in the dusk of falling evening because of the shadows of the elevated structure and the great bridge overhead.

The fox was gone!

The hound was in the tangle of New Chambers, Cherry, Oak, Madison, Pearl, Rose and Vandewater Streets. He ran to right and left, peering into doorways, darting into saloons and out again, hoping against hope that the lost trail might be picked up again.

The fox was safe on his way. He had doubled on his tracks and was back in North William Street, only a few hundred feet from his pursuer but hopelessly lost to him.

In the William Street arch of the bridge is set an open stair leading to the tracks above. It is no wider than the door of an ordinary room. The fox entered and ascended the stone steps. He was back in the swarming, fighting multitude of people, swallowed up by it. He let the rush carry him and he was swept aboard a car bound for Brooklyn.

As the car passed the last arch and struck the span high above the river and the pier tops, the hound below was running about, whimpering with distress and wondering what Captain Kearney would say to him when he reported.

The fox left the car in Brooklyn and walked to the Catherine Street ferry, turning in his tracks occasionally to assure himself that his pursuer had been really outwitted. He recrossed the East River by way of the ferry and then struck through the familiar lower East Side of Manhattan until he reached Corlear's Hook Park. Here he found "Deefy's" saloon, so called because the owner was deaf and dumb and his patronage was from those similarly afflicted. It was a place of silent refreshment.

"Deefy's" stands there to-day, one of the

quaintest places in one of the quaintest corners of a city, as interesting to even the casual observer as London was to the great novelist who wrote of London's streets and London's poor.

The probationer entered the saloon by the "Family" entrance and took his seat at a table in a tiny room back of the bar. In the sign language he ordered, from a deaf and dumb waiter, a bowl of stew and a cup of coffee.

He found a newspaper and made himself comfortable in this secure nook until the coming of "Boston Ed."

## CHAPTER XXXI

PROMPTLY at eleven o'clock the man with the birthmark under his left eye showed his face in the door of the little room back of Deefy's bar.

"Bill," he whispered, a wide grin spreading over his homely and splotched countenance.

"Yes."

"She's outside."

Hawkins jumped to his feet.

"Set still, Bill," commanded "Boston Ed." "I got it fixed with Deefy. You two can have the room all to yourselves for awhile. He understands. You can talk all you want, Bill. I'll keep an eye on the door and sip a couple of bran-nigans."

He withdrew his head and in a few moments a woman was shoved into the little room and the door banged tight behind her.

The sunken eyes of the old probationer seemed to be suddenly covered with a haze. Tears flowed

down his cheeks. His long arms were outstretched.

“Jennie!”

The woman, a slender, tired creature, with the marks of years of physical toil upon her, sobbed. She tried to advance to the outstretched arms but her legs refused to move.

“Bill! Oh, my God, Bill! At last! At last!”

The words came from her brokenly, as the breast under her plain, black waist heaved convulsively.

Her body began to sway and he sprang to her and took her in his arms.

When the joy of this world-weary couple, sadly mingled with grief, had been spent, they sat close together at the table clasping each other's hands.

“I'm a different man, Jennie,” said Hawkins. “I'm a different man. The faith of God has come to me.”

“How'd you get it, Bill?” she asked eagerly.

“They sent up a boy for life and he was innocent,” he told her. “The boy never done a wrong thing. The cops put it on him. But he never flickered and he prayed every morning and

night. I helped him escape and now he wants me. I'm going to find him and find out if he needs any more help."

She pressed his hands in her own when he paused.

"I thought of our own boy who would 'a' been his age," he went on. "I got to love him — he was that kind and gentle. He was always thinking of his own poor, old mother and she died without seeing him after they sent him up."

"Poor lad."

"Yes, but he was a brave one."

"And they gave you a probation, Bill?"

"Yes, but only so's they could follow me and get the boy."

He suppressed a desire to rip out an oath against his old enemies.

"But how about you, Jennie?" he asked.

"I have been working right along, Bill," she replied. "One time I thought I would blow up but somehow I got my strength and pulled out all right. There was plenty of men after me when I was still pretty, Bill, but I been true to you, old man. I been true to you, my Bill."

He patted her thin shoulders.



"When I come out of Sing Sing after my first bit I heard you was going down the line and I got sick and turned away from you, Jennie."

"There's always people who want to see a helpless woman helped to hell," she said bitterly. "I never done nothing wrong, Bill. I was tempted when I was hungry and just out of Bellevue but I stuck out on the level, old man. So help me God, I did."

"Jennie, if you'd gone plumb to the middle of hell I'd come for you," he said. One of his long arms was about her shoulder. She rested her head in its bend.

"You tired, Jennie?" he asked.

"Yes, Bill."

"You want to go home?"

"Yes; let's go home. I gotta place ready for you."

His eyes glistened with love for the woman who was again to be his helpmeet.

"I'm afraid to, Jennie," he told her after a pause. "The bull's been after me all day."

"When can you come, Bill?"

"Soon's I see the young man. I gotta reach him first and then I'll send for you or come for you."

"Is he far away?"

"Yes."

"How you going to get there?"

"Work my way."

She loosened her waist and pulled out a roll of bills.

"I brought this for you, Bill," she said. "I know'd you would want some. I got six hundred in the bank now and there's two hundred."

He hesitated about taking the money.

"You gotta take it, Bill," she said. "It will bring you back to me sooner and you can pay it back in no time."

He took a hundred dollars of the money.

"Boston Ed" tapped on the door and then poked in his face.

"How's the old folks?" he asked.

They smiled at him in gratitude for his kindness.

"The party breaking up?"

"Yes; you get Jennie home safe for me; I gotta slope out of town," said Bill.

Husband and wife embraced and the old probationer slipped from the room, made his way through the gesticulating deaf and dumb patrons of the saloon and disappeared into the night.

## CHAPTER XXXII

**I**N his mountain refuge there were hours of loneliness which beset John Nelson. He realized that the more he achieved in life and the greater grew his love for Molly Bryan the more terrible would be the reckoning for him should the police ever corner him. The oppressiveness of these hours became such that he looked about for a mental occupation that would serve to drive from his thoughts the fear that seemed to fasten on him with tighter grip as the weeks passed.

In the Dark Corner he was the only man with money and sufficient warmth and food and shelter sound enough to make actual physical existence bearable in winter. The poverty of the mountain families was but little short of the poverty of despair. Many of them lived through the seasons with never the possession of money, getting their food from their patches of open ground and their clothes by trading.

The majority of the people about him could not

read. Some of them had never heard of Christ. As he had turned to the poor in the mill section of Greenville, he turned to the mountaineers of the Dark Corner. With one of his negro servants he made excursions from his castle, going from cabin to cabin, finding out what was needed most and giving freely. On these Samaritan trips he carried a pocket Bible and when he could find an excuse for so doing he would read to them the message that packs the Book from Genesis to Revelation, that the mercy of God shall endure forever.

The bearded hermit was always welcome. He would not drink of the liquor they made in their hidden stills and at first they thought this strange. They soon found that he was a man of peace and good-will and when they realized that his motive was unselfish love for mankind, he grew so in their esteem that he was able to end many of their bitter family quarrels.

No law reached these people of the mountains save when some daring revenue spy would come in disguise as a pedler and raid their stills. The arrest and conviction of the head of a family meant a woman and children left on the mountain-

sides, sometimes to starve. Nelson tided such families through the period of imprisonment of their protectors. As he thus exerted himself in their behalf, his words carried more weight with them and his simple doctrine of kindness and mercy began to have telling effect.

On the edge of his estate he built a pine church with a tiny spire tipping the tree line. Here he provided a pulpit for the mission priests and circuit riders who traveled the mountain paths. Here he made a place for the Word of God and not for the word of a Diet or a Conference.

The people were as primitive and as unworldly as children. They never stole, they never lied and they knew nothing of cheating. They sold the corn liquor they made without paying the government tax because it was the only product they could get from the grain that would pay them enough to keep their children alive. They were too poor to distill in quantities large enough to bring them in sufficient returns to meet the revenue demand.

In such good work Nelson realized the true value of wealth. To give to others was the great privilege he had gained by his skill and the mas-

tery of his craft. The simple devotion of the people he helped repaid him a thousandfold for his humane efforts.

The snow of the first winter in his mountain home began to fly and Nelson made a trip into the city to secure the copies of the Herald he had commissioned a newsdealer to save for him. He spent part of a day with Mr. Bryan and Lansing and then, the floor of his car thick with the accumulated newspapers, hastened back to his castle.

That night, before a log fire in his study, he spread the copies of the Herald on a large table and arranged them in order of their issue. Far into the night he scanned the personal columns until his eyes ached and he was compelled to retire.

The next night he resumed his search and, with a shout of delight, discovered the reply of Hawkins:

“Kid. — O. K. December. — Bill.”

The old convict had managed in some way to get his release from prison. He was coming to him, he, of all the men who could help him, the only man he could trust with his secret. Into

Bill's hands he would give the wealth he had acquired, give it freely, gladly, that he might spend it in the hunt for the man whose arrest and conviction would take from him the disgrace put upon him by the law that had worked abortively.

Hope that had practical reason back of it filled him. Molly was nearer to him than she had ever been since the day he first saw her sweet face and heard her lovely voice. He felt as if he could go to her even then, for he was filled with confidence newly born.

With Bill amply supplied with money and exploring the underworld for the real murderer, he and Molly might become married. By early spring he would finish his most important invention, a new knitting machine that would replace those already made. He would put up a knitting mill in conjunction with the textile mills and have his own plant. He could bring Molly to his castle until the day came when Bill would bring in *his* quarry.

Molly and her father had made the trip to his home and workshop once during the previous summer. Nelson had kept sacred the chair she had used. A handkerchief she had left on his working

desk he allowed to remain there undisturbed save when he would pick it up and press it to his lips.

He was still holding the paper in his hands and dreaming of love and happiness and content when the telephone rang. It was nine o'clock. He picked up the receiver eagerly.

"Yes," he said, as he recognized her voice.

"It is nearing Christmas time," she told him, a plaintive note in her voice.

"I must shop for the mountain children," he told her. "I had almost forgotten."

"You are coming into Greenville, then?"

"Yes; I must."

"You will need more than a single day."

He tried to protest that his work was pressing.

"You are going to stay with us for a good part of the holidays," she told him decisively. "Father, mother, Jim and I all insist and we will not take a refusal. You must start next Wednesday morning early and I shall meet you in my motor on Paris Mountain."

The thought of being near her for an entire day, for two days or more, perhaps, thrilled him and tempted him to leave his hiding place. The peace of her father's household, the charm and



grace of life there, the music in the evenings with the logs burning and the bright silver winking back to the flames, his share in blissful domesticity, all these things flashed through his mind.

"Then, if I must," he told her, "I shall be on Paris Mountain next Wednesday."

His hands trembled as he replaced the receiver and picked up his square and compass. He tried to begin work on his plans but gave it up.

In every tone of every word she had spoken over the telephone there was a message of love that he could not mistake. Even a little sigh had come to him trembling through the thread of wire strung over the mountains.

Her hand was his for the asking. Her heart was already his. Within his grasp was the greatest happiness God could give a man, the right to love and hold forever a pure and beautiful woman who loved him.

He paced the floor of the room, his mind filled with an exquisite dream-life. She would share this house with him, be its mistress, bring to it the subtle fragrance and sweetness which she alone possessed. In winter and in times of storm her smile would fill his home with a radiance

sweeter and more blessed than the sunshine of spring.

She would come tiptoeing to his door as he worked with his machinery. She would look in and he would stop at his task long enough to welcome her and to sip of the sweetness of her lips and feel the warmth of her love as her arms clasped his neck. He sank into her chair and picked up the handkerchief, a filmy bit of linen, pressing it to his lips.

Ten o'clock passed and eleven struck as he sat in silent and happy dreaming. Suddenly the handkerchief dropped from his hands and his face showed white as a sheet of paper in the light of his student's lamp.

He had heard some one moving outside the house. There had been the crackle of frozen snow.

His three black servants were far off in their cottage for the night. Who was this marauder?

Again came the sound. Some one was surely walking beneath his windows.

Nelson dropped to his hands and knees, crept to the wall and turned an electric switch, plunging the house in darkness from cellar to attic.

Against the many windows of his castle showed the snow-laden boughs of the trees in a glow that came from the reflection of the white pall covering the earth.

He felt for his wallet, which held the money he was to use in the event of flight becoming necessary; it was in his pocket. A step and he was at his desk. He opened a drawer softly. In his right hand showed the dark outline of a blue-steel revolver. His dreams of love had vanished. He was again the escaped convict making a fight for the liberty he had stolen.

The snow was not deep enough to impede his motor. He hurried to the secret entrance to his garage, opened the masked door and stood waiting at the head of a flight of narrow stairs.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

**A**S Nelson stood in the darkness of the room, holding his breath, he felt the weight of the pistol in his right hand and the thought came to him that should there be only that one man — Michael Kearney — he would be tempted to slay.

On the blue nose of his weapon was screwed a Maxim silencer. The voice of death would be dropped to a whisper. The end of the sleuth would never be known by the outside world.

Before him loomed the brown horror of a cell and sunless, skyless days. The heart of Molly Bryan would be broken as the heart of his mother had been broken.

If he killed would it not be in self-defense and in the highest and fullest meaning of the phrase? There are things worse than death.

There was a slight sound against the side of the house beneath the window he faced. Whoever this was, coming as a thief in the night, would

soon show his head over the sill. The weight of the revolver in his hand seemed to increase.

Not a man among his neighbors would have hesitated to slay under the circumstances and to shout with triumph at the fall of his enemy. Not a man among them would do other than rally to his aid, even though a great company of enemies encompassed him. But he was no man to take human life. He realized it suddenly. Moisture exuded from his fingers and blurred the steel of his weapon in the dark.

He had said to himself that no one would know of the death of the relentless hound that had pursued him from a pit of despond to Arcady. God and his conscience would know it!

He crossed the room on his toes rapidly and replaced the weapon in his desk.

The terrible injustice that had blasted his life at twenty-one, that had scarred and branded him forever, that had sent his sweet, patient, little mother to a sorrowful death and that had penned him in a cage for the first five years of his maturity, had drawn him closer to his Maker.

He might have been called a coward but his sorrows, his anxieties, his flight and his struggle

to keep himself pure and true, even in this moment of extreme torture of fear, had found him holding to and trusting in his faith in God. Unarmed, he stood at the little door, poised for flight.

A sound came from the window-sill, and was repeated. It came steadily for a few seconds and ended with a snap, as the latch over the window sash gave under the upward pressure of a jimmy. The sash was raised, slowly, cautiously.

A man's head, covered with a black, slouch hat, showed over the sill, then a pair of shoulders, and a long-armed creature was in the room, landing as lightly on his toes as if he had been a trained trapeze performer. The man was not Kearney!

Nelson's eyes, accustomed to the darkness, recognized the heavy shoulders and the squat figure.

"Bill!" he whispered, repressing a cry of joy that rose from his heart.

"Kid!" came the answer.

They strode to each other and clasped hands.

"Is it safe, boy?" asked the old burglar. "Is there any one else in the house?"

"Not a soul."

"Thank God."

“Come to the top floor; it will be even safer there.”

Nelson took the old man to the attic, drew the blinds and switched on a light.

He looked at the old convict for a moment and then placed his arms about his shoulders as would a son embracing a father after long years of separation. He remembered his bleeding fingers as he toiled in the dark in their cell, making the gray suit of clothes; he remembered the words of comfort his lips had spoken, when he received news of the death of his mother, and of his sacrifice for him when he took all the blame for the possession of the clothes he had made so futilely.

Bill stood in the glare of the light, scanning the face of the younger man, the man whose prayers had inspired him and from whose lips had come that old, humane expression of Christian charity and compassion: “It wasn’t her fault!”

“Boy,” said the old probationer, “I come to you because I knew you needed me. That hound at headquarters turned me loose so that he could follow me and get you.”

Nelson started.

"But don't worry," Hawkins assured him, "for I'm an old fox and hard to follow."

"Why did you come in by the window?"

"It was the safest way," explained Bill. "Although I felt certain that no one was shadowing me, I could not be dead sure. So I thought I'd come in as a burglar and if there was any shadow after me, he'd think I was back in the old game. If I was caught, they'd get me for the old sin. The shadow wouldn't know that John Nelson was Jim Montgomery."

Hawkins dropped into a chair, looked about the room and began studying the bars, weights and trapezes.

"Them things?" he asked, with the wave of a hand.

"I work with them every day and have changed my measurements," explained Nelson. "I am taller and broader and my arms and legs are longer."

Hawkins nodded.

"I doubt if they'd recognize you," he said.

"How did you find me?" asked Nelson. "I was afraid to put a name in the personal."

"After I reached Greenville, it didn't take me



long to hear about John Nelson," he replied. "I mingled with the machinists as a laborer, heard about your inventions and success and about your work with the poor people. I knew you were Nelson. But I didn't dare send you a note or get in touch with you in the daylight. I been hunted too long to run any chances. When I found out where your place was, I traveled on foot. I got a bed and lodging in a cabin two miles away. As soon as everybody was asleep, I slipped out of the cabin and here I am."

They were both silent for a moment.

"I know what you thinking about, Kid," said Hawkins finally.

"The guilty man," Nelson said slowly.

"You want me to try to get him."

"Yes; I have plenty of money now but I did not dare hire detectives."

"*They* couldn't get him after ten years."

"Can any one find him?"

Bill felt the anxiety and eagerness, the hunger for a real hope, in Nelson's voice.

"If any one can get him I'm the one," he replied slowly. "I'm gonna get him, too. I gotta get him, boy. I owe you something more than a

few years out of 'stir.' ” His voice quavered with emotion.

“ You put a God in my brain and heart,” he went on. “ You made a soul come to life in my old body.” In his sunken eyes there was a luster that made beneficent the deep-lined face. “ I found my old girl,” he continued, after a pause in which he mastered his feelings. “ You made me want to find her and, thank God, I found her a good and patient woman and glad to have her man back. I’m some different, Kid. I’m some different and I owe it to you. I’m going after that man who let you be sent up for life and I’m going to get him and drag him to the office of the district attorney, if I get there with my head caved in.”

The old man had risen from his chair. The fire in him had flashed into life again, and he looked as strong as an old ring warrior.

“ What time is it? ” he demanded suddenly.

Nelson looked at his watch.

“ Half after midnight,” he said.

“ I must beat it back to the cabin. I want to keep you covered right.”

Nelson took his wallet from his pocket.

"Here is plenty of money, Bill," he said. "Take it and use it. It isn't a loan or a gift. What is mine is yours. Spend all that is necessary. I am a rich man. You were the means of my achieving wealth."

"Guess I'll need some of it," the probationer said. "I'll take it, anyhow, and when all comes out right I'll account to you for it. Then my old woman and I will come down here and work for you."

Nelson placed a hand affectionately on the old man's shoulder.

"Does a son let his father work for him?" he asked. "No! I'll work for you, Bill, many years, God willing."

They left the attic and from the dark room below Bill Hawkins stepped to the window-sill and in a few moments was in the snow-covered road leading from the grounds.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

**A** STORM, springing from Carib seas, had swept northward along the Florida and Georgia shores. Down from the north came the tail-end of a big blizzard; the two met off the Carolina coast.

The two big winds were split asunder, each into two shrieking, invisible, routed armies of the air. The left flank of the storm from the north shot oceanward and parallel with the right flank of the howling gale from the Caribs. The left flank of the tropical storm went westward and toward the under hills of the Blue Ridge, sweeping beside the right flank of the northern tempest.

In the wild rush of temperatures seeking normal levels, heat and cold mingled in the South Carolina mountains and a deluge of rain resulted.

Mighty Cæsar's Head, King's Mountain and Paris Mountain were washed clear of snow by the torrent. The wind skirled in leafless boughs and

branches, howled through ravines and gorges in mountainsides and the flood made the Saluda pick up its bed and rush away even as did the man who lay ill and was made well by a miracle.

The mountain roads were torn and ripped by the flood; they gave up the frost in them and the red clay was turned to a series of twisted ribbons.

With the clatter of a dozen rapid-fire guns came a low-swung automobile with unusually heavy tires, high mud guards and huge oil tank toward the crest of Paris Mountain from the west. A screen of mud and water half obscured the driver. Big goggles hid his eyes. Occasionally he would lift a hand from the wheel and scrape the mud from them or dash it from his iron-gray beard.

On the top of the mountain, standing in a run-about type of machine, a girl waited. Her left hand shaded her eyes as she peered down the mountainside, watching the oncoming car, and she steadied her slight form by grasping the steering gear.

She had torn a racing mask from her face and it lay, caked with red clay, on the driver's seat behind her. Her abundant hair had fallen from its fastenings and the wind played with it as a

great cat would play with a loose hank of golden yarn.

The onrushing motor made the crest of the mountain with the heavy lurch of a great beast in attack, came to a stop and shivered, sending flecks of mud shooting to right and left as the driver pulled himself from the wheel seat.

Molly Bryan lifted her right hand high in the air in the unconscious salute of ancient times.

Stripping himself of great coat and goggles, and tossing them into his machine, John Nelson hurried to her.

"I saw you when you started down Glassy Mountain," she said. Her face was pale. "I did not know whether you would make it safely." Her left hand went to her heart.

"I was afraid that you might be hurt," she added.

He looked up into her eyes and saw the loving concern in them.

His beard was splashed with clay. In his eyes was the effulgence of the stars. He had come, perilously coursing up and down the mountains, to ask her aid in buying Christmas gifts, in the shops of the little city nestling below them, for

the little children of the poor in the Dark Corner. He was the unconscious instrument of one of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor."

The look in her eyes, the trembling of the hand she extended to him, the quaver in her soft voice, the quick flush that replaced the pallor of her cheeks as she read the love message in his look, gave him the hint that she expected his tongue to utter the thoughts that filled his mind.

But he held back the words. He was still master of his tongue, but no man with love in his heart, in every fiber of his being can master his soul. He was not certain that the time had come when he might tell her with his lips how he loved her.

It was sunset but there was no setting of the sun, for the storm had not wholly passed. The clouds in the west piled in great castles and turrets and walls without color, a sômer city for some mighty lord in the land of phantasy.

He held up a hand to her. She took it and started to step from her car. Her heel slipped on the wet running board and she fell against his breast.

Her head lay on his shoulder and, with the

world far below them and the clouds lowering about them, their lips met in the kiss of betrothal.

With Molly Bryan's kiss on his lips and sweetening his life, Nelson found himself on the other side of the chasm he had shrunk from with dread in his heart.

The thought that his staunch friend, the old convict, was off on the hunt for the man he dared not himself seek brought him a measure of assurance for his still troubling conscience.

Then, too, Molly took total possession of him and banished from his mind all concern except the moment's concern. He felt the warmth of her sweet woman's body and its soft pressure against his, the burn and tingle of her flushed cheeks.

Mr. and Mrs. Bryan were anxiously awaiting them when their machines swung into the broad road leading through the estate to the mansion which crowned it.

"Here's Santa Claus," Molly shouted to her parents. "And I am Mrs. Santa Claus." She clasped his arm and clung to it as they made their way up the piazza steps.

"Mother — father," she said, "John and I love each other. He has asked me to be his wife."



“ I knew it,” said the mother quietly.

There was no further fighting with conscience now and no room for heed of the to-morrow. However loudly the voice of duty might ring he could not answer it.

“ May I have her for better or for worse? ” he asked the parents.

Mr. Bryan’s face had paled. “ Molly must talk with her mother,” he said. “ Will you join me in the library after you have been to your room, Nelson? ”

## CHAPTER XXXV

**T**HE wind puffed down the great chimney and filled Mr. Bryan's library with the fragrance of burning oak and pine. The logs crackled above their deepening ashen bed. The night had come and the well-shelved room was snug with the glow from the hearth.

"Nelson," began Mr. Bryan, leaning forward in his arm-chair, "you are asking us for the best we have — our only daughter. Are you worthy?"

"I have tried to be."

"You must know that you have been the subject of gossip because you have lived as a hermit."

"Yes."

"And you have admitted that there is something in your own life which you do not feel that I, Molly's father, should share."

"I know it."

"Have you anything to hide from me now?"

The eyes of the younger man stared into the fire. The dancing flames cast grotesque shadows

on his bearded face. His fingers tightened for a moment on the arms of his chair. If he were to lie, the time had come for its utterance, but there was no lie within the man.

"I cannot give you my confidence," he replied.  
"I cannot, now."

"Nelson, my measure of a man is by his integrity and his intelligence," Mr. Bryan urged. "You have brains and industry. Whether you were a foundling at birth or a child of the streets in the North will not weigh heavily in my decision." His voice was kindly and assuring.

"My boy," he said, "you must open your heart to me. I cannot let my daughter undertake to share your life with her eyes blindfolded."

"I cannot tell you now, Mr. Bryan," Nelson repeated.

"Then there is only one other course for you if you refuse to trust me," Mr. Bryan said.

"And that is?"

"Tell *her*. Tell her *everything*. She is of the stamp of her dear mother. She is a young woman but a brave and serious one. She would countenance nothing that would bring a touch of dishonor to her or to her parents."

"Tell — her?" gasped Nelson.

"Yes."

Molly entered the library, coming from her mother, radiant with smiles. She paused as she saw the pallor of her lover's face and the serious look upon her father's.

"What is the matter?" she demanded.

Mr. Bryan rose from his chair.

"I shall leave you together for awhile," he said, as he left the room.

"John!"

With his name on her lips she went to him, and he took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Let us go outside, on the piazza," he said. "I feel as though I should choke in here. There is something I must tell you."

She turned from him and flung wide a deep window. The night scowled at them as they left the warm and lighted room for the rain and the dark.

"I have something to tell you," he repeated.

"That you love me?" she asked.

"Love you?" he repeated. "My heart is torn with love for you."

"Nothing else matters."

She crept to his side and clasped his hands in hers.

"Your father wants to know who I am," he told her.

"I know who you are. You are John Nelson, my lover."

"He wants to know whence I came."

"From heaven — to me," she answered, with a little laugh of content as she kissed him.

"From prison," he said.

"Prison?"

Her laugh vied with the tinkle of the rain in a fountain near the piazza.

"Why, of course you have been in prison," she said to him. "You have locked yourself in a cell in a mountain house away from me, your sweetheart who loved you all the year."

"But you must be serious," he bade her. "You know that I came here as a common workman. I am an escaped convict. I was sent to prison in the North for life. I was convicted of —"

"I know what you were convicted of," she whispered, smothering his lips with her own. "You were convicted of being too kind and too

good to your fellow man. Christ was so convicted."

The words fell solemnly from her lips, and they startled Nelson.

"I was convicted of murder," he said, "of murder in the second degree. I was innocent. I was sentenced, an innocent man, to life in prison. My name is James Montgomery and the police seek me."

She fell back from him for a moment, the shadows enshrouding her. But she did not leave him for long. Her arms were again about his neck and her lips turned to his.

"I knew that you had been hurt by some one or something," she whispered, pressing her cheek against his. "You do not need to tell me of your innocence. I shall share your sorrows and your joys until death do us part."

"I have no moral right to marry you," he said.

"But you shall take me for your wife," she cried. "I shall live in the mountains with you and never leave your side and, if they come for you, they shall never take you as long as I have a breath of life. They can't have you, my sweetheart. You are mine until death."



She fell back from him for a moment, the shadows  
enshrouding her.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI

THE eyes of Mike Kearney's mother were becoming very dim with age. She no longer leaned from the window to catch a glimpse of her homecoming boy at mealtime. From the third floor of the little old house in Oliver Street the people on the sidewalks were blurred, and she could barely distinguish men from women.

Her old "Key of Heaven" was now replaced by a volume of prayer in much heavier type and she wore glasses during her almost constant devotions.

As the detective captain in charge of the Homicide Bureau at headquarters, Kearney found even less time to turn his thoughts away from the business of man hunting. A new generation of criminals had sprung up, a generation to be gathered in, introduced to the third degree, "mugged and measured" and catalogued.

He had developed some excellent sleuths and

was beginning to feel pleasure in watching them advance under his guidance and training. He had gained the title of "New York's Best Plainclothes Man" and Inspector Ranscombe had never ceased to sing his praises to the Commissioner.

Kearney's only recreation was still his home, and the sound of his mother's voice, with its pleasing bit of brogue, was his only music. But as the burden of her years became heavier, the strength of her mind was sapped slowly, gradually. She would forget things that had happened only an hour before and remember things vividly and suddenly that had happened years and years past. One of the police surgeons had advised Kearney to replace her beer with an occasional drink of something stronger, so that rheumatism and gouty tendencies might not be added to the afflictions of her fast approaching decrepitude.

When Mrs. Kearney was served with her evening sip of whiskey and water by her son, her tongue would begin to wag. She would wander from subject to subject in seemingly interminable monologues. Her oid cronies tried in vain to stop the flow of her garrulity, so that their own

tongues might wag, but they had to give it up and so they called less frequently.

But Mike, the apple of her eye, to whom she was all the world, never ceased to pretend to be interested, as he sat with her in the sunny window of her spotless kitchen.

"Now I remember very well," she droned, with quavering voice one evening, without specific reference to any one in particular. "I remember very well that she was quite a fine lady; wasn't she, Mike?"

"She was that, mother," replied the son, dragging at his pipe. "She was a grand lady."

"No; not at all grand," she protested, "for she wasn't of the r'yalty kind. She was quiet and nice and dressed so simple."

She paused and picked up his beer bottle.

"Is it empty, Mike?" she asked. "I can't see as well as I used to see, lad. Shall I get you a nice, fresh, cold bottle?"

"Thank you, mother."

She groped to the window and raised it, taking a bottle from the fire escape.

The springtime had come again and a gentle, warm breeze entered the room.

“My!” she exclaimed, “the winter has gone at last.”

She fumbled about for the beer opener. He found it and gave it to her. She loved to do things for him as in the old days and he humored her.

“It was just after I was gettin’ your supper, lad,” she went on. “Oh, it must be nearly eleven years now. She came in the dure and stood right there so solemn and sweet like, with her little bonnet with the beads. I can see them dancin’ in the gaslight now. You could tell in a minute she didn’t belong in the nayborhood. Yes, blood tells. She must have had it in her. The Montgomerys are the best of Irish, as ye know or ought to know.”

“The Montgomerys?” he asked.

“Yis; the old lady whose son was sint up.”

The subject of her wandering gossip and reminiscence changed and she babbled on. Kearney settled down to read his afternoon paper as she talked.

Her voice and her constant loving kindnesses were all that he had in life, besides his job. As he noticed that her mind was wandering to an unusual degree, a touch of fear crept into his

heart. He asked himself what would he do when she was gone. She always kissed him when he left or entered the flat, and she was always busy with his undergarments, his collars, his bed linen, his meals, his beer.

Could any other woman take her place? He hunched himself in his chair, a sign of his uneasiness.

Kearney had decided on spring for his vacation time. During pleasant weather, murder, like hydrophobia, is rare. He could best afford to leave the job then. Summer, with its maddening days for those packed like cattle in the tenements, would be his busiest season.

He told himself that after this vacation he would never leave his mother again. He had arranged for one of her cronies to care for her until his return.

Kearney had made up his mind to take a trip south. He had a clue, after ten years of patient waiting, that was worth looking up. The change might do him good and at the same time he would have something to occupy his mind.

Some one had placed a headstone on the grave of the mother of James Montgomery. Some one

was paying the keeper of the cemetery near Nyack to weed the little plot and keep it bright with flowers.

Careful inquiry had shown him that, save for her convict son, Mrs. Montgomery had left no relatives. The cemetery keeper had been cautiously questioned. He said that through the mails had come first one hundred dollars in cash with a typewritten note to the effect that a friend of the Montgomery family desired the grave marked. Afterward came other sums to pay for keeping up the plot.

The postmark on these anonymous communications was "Greenville, S. C."

Kearney desired to go to Greenville and get in touch with the postal authorities there.

Another letter would be mailed from that town to Nyack. He would take a glimpse of the man who mailed it.

He had the typewritten notes. If he failed to find his man through the post-office, he could trace him by means of the typing. Every typewriting machine has its individuality, just as has every human being. The type of no two machines strikes exactly alike. He would find the machine

and then find the man, if it became necessary to go about it in that way. He would clear up the Montgomery case and he would hold the record of never having been beaten out by a criminal.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

**M**ICHAEL KEARNEY registered at the Mansion House, Greenville's best hotel, as James Flynn.

In his room he unpacked his grip. Among other things he removed was a long and wide envelope. It contained a letter from his inspector authorizing him to request any aid he might need in the name of the police of the City of New York.

The big envelope also contained a certified copy of the police records of James Montgomery, convicted of the murder of Walter Trueblood, night watchman of the West End National Bank. These records included photographs in full face and profile and the Bertillon measurements and finger prints. There was also a warrant drawn by a New York magistrate, charging James Montgomery with being a fugitive from justice and an escaped convict.

Kearney did not trust these important docu-



ments to the care of the hotel servants. As soon as he had washed his face and combed his shock of hair, he went to the office of the hotel manager and had them deposited in his safe.

The man hunter knew from the soft sound of the voices he heard about him that his own voice would be in striking contrast. It would be futile for him to try the pose of a Southerner. So he let it be known that he was a New Yorker who wanted to live in the South and invest a limited amount of capital. He told the hotel clerk that he was looking for a business opening. His stolid countenance gave no hint of his calling. His general appearance was bourgeoisie. He could have hung about a bank door or a saloon entrance for hours without causing suspicion or creating curiosity.

Kearney left the hotel to look over the city. He coursed its two or three business streets much as a hunting dog would range, in its preliminary run over a field.

He got the points of the compass set in his mind, the general location of buildings and the industrial, business and residential sections. He studied the general scheme of the trolley system

and took rides to the end of each branch, inquiring about cotton mills and other plants with the casual questions of a sightseer.

He had not forgotten the testimony of Montgomery that he was an apprentice machinist and he remembered the story of the boy's anxiety for his kit of tools. He drifted among the men who handled the machinery of the mills with a story that he wanted to start up a small foundry with a partner who was an expert. All the while his keen little eyes studied closely the face of every man he met.

After several days of preliminary scouting, he visited the office of the United States District Attorney for the Greenville district. He explained his mission and showed his credentials. He asked the District Attorney to extend to the police of New York his aid in intercepting a letter that would be mailed in Greenville to a certain address in Nyack, N. Y.

Letters from one man had been mailed quarterly to Nyack from the mountain city. One should be mailed during the first days of June. If possible, he desired to see the man who mailed it. If he could find nothing more than the point at which

the letter was mailed, that would help, for it would narrow his field of inquiry.

The United States District Attorney knew only that a search was being made for an escaped convict. The police of the great cities and the United States Secret Service generally work in harmony, so the District Attorney turned over the detective to a postal inspector.

With the inspector, Kearney studied the working of the Greenville post-office. He learned that the big mills sent their mail in their own bags by messengers who received the incoming mail and took it away. Certain clerks handled this business entirely. Every mail-bag from a mill would be watched carefully and if a letter addressed to Nyack was found in one of them, Kearney would be given it and he would know that in that particular mill was the man he wanted. The rest would be only a matter of patience and Kearney had plenty of patience. It was his long suit.

There were not more than fifty mail-boxes in the city. The letters dropped in each of these would be watched. The average man would have said that Kearney was looking for a needle in a haystack. If he was, he was going about it

systematically. He was separating the stack into easily handled sheaves and having a man go through each.

The New York sleuth observed that the letter-boxes in the post-office building were heavily patronized. Country folk bought their stamps one at a time and liked to wait for the distribution of the mails. This gave them a chance to exchange gossip, talk business and indulge in political arguments. Then, too, there were several hundred private letter-boxes, bringing to the building as many people of the well-to-do class.

Kearney determined to give his personal attention to the people who came and went from the building. He was back on the trail after eleven years. Indeed, eleven years were as eleven days to him. If his natural span of life had been seventy decades instead of seven, he would have been patient through the whole seven hundred years.

He had not been able to pick up the lost tracks of Hawkins but Hawkins was skilled in the tricks of the underworld. The real man he was after had been but a country boy when he was sent up for life. In dodging the law he had big chances

against him because of his inexperience. He would make many mistakes. He had made one — sending money to Nyack.

It is a police axiom that even the most careful of criminals sometimes overlooks an important detail in covering himself. The bank teller who steals from the cashier, the cashier who steals from the president and the president who steals from the stockholders are all fallible.

Kearney watched and waited, keeping his ears open all the time to catch the gossip of a small city. He took it all in and sifted it. In his eyes was the dull stare of a totally uninterested man. His clean-shaven face, with its half-coarse features, wore a blank expression. He was adept in deception, which is a quality to be considered in the art of detection.

There was one big topic that seemed to hold the attention of the people who flocked to the post-office at intervals during the day. It was the marriage of John Nelson to Molly Bryan, the daughter of the president of the Reedy River Cotton Mill Company.

From fragments of conversation, Kearney learned that these two people were much beloved,

the girl because of her beauty and her earnest work among the poor of the mill settlements, and the man because of a saintly life.

Through the buzz and hum of the gossips, the virtues of this extraordinary man, who lived far back in the mountains and was rich and kind at the same time, were dinned into the head of the man in ambush.

At sunset, on the evening of the third day of June, just as the post-office was about to close and as the last of the idlers began to depart, a man of serious mien, wearing a beard touched with gray, stepped from an automobile in front of the building. He entered and went to one of the mail slots, dropping a letter therein.

It had hardly touched the bottom of the little chute when three distinct knocks sounded on the glass window-pane behind the detective. It was the signal agreed upon between the clerk within and the man on watch outside.

A thrill of exultation that was worth waiting eleven years to experience shot through Kearney. His hands itched to close on the arm of this person. The mastering of this one emotion of which his nature was capable left him astonished, for he had

not expected to come upon a man of the type before him. There was something so grave in the eyes of his quarry and in the cast of his countenance that one could easily have mistaken him for a preacher of the Word of God. His carriage was dignified and he was dressed soberly and without ornament.

The people on the steps of the post-office had drawn back respectfully before him, touching their hats. It was evident that he was widely known and that he was revered.

Kearney had not determined what step to take next when the man whose shadow he was to become was stopped by another.

"Oh, Mr. Nelson," cried the citizen accosting him, "I would like to wish you all the happiness in the world the day before your marriage."

Nelson's face broke into a smile of pleasure.

"Thank you, sir," he replied. "I could never hope to deserve all the good wishes that have been offered me."

"Deserve them!" his well-wisher exclaimed. "Why, the country people from up your way are already flocking to town in their wagons to crowd about the church during the ceremony and to sing your praises. They seem to feel that they can

never do enough to show how much they love you."

Nelson looked embarrassed and returned to his machine outside.

Kearney had studied him from the crown of his head to the heels. If that man was Jim Montgomery, the change was remarkable. He made no attempt to follow him. He felt sure that Nelson had not seen him. A man as prominent in the community as Nelson was could be easily found at any hour of the day or night and then, too, the morrow was his wedding day!

Kearney took the letter from the postal employee inside and went to his hotel room.

He asked the clerk for his large envelope from the safe, and when his door was closed behind him, he drew forth the pictures from the Gallery of Rogues. He studied them carefully. The man hunter felt that there was some faint, intangible hint about the eyes in the photographs which connected them with the man who had mailed the letter to Nyack.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

**T**WO weeks of seclusion in their mountain home, two weeks with every hour of day and night filled with golden romance, and John Nelson and his bride brought an end to their honeymoon.

The castle of the one-time hermit contained his workshop. From it had gone his latest invention. His improved knitting machines were already installed in a plant built for them. His company had been capitalized and set in motion. He was its president and chief stockholder.

Scores of women and girls from the mill country around and even from the backwoods were waiting for employment.

Although his knitting mills could produce the same amount of finished product at half the operating expenses of any other mill, Nelson did not look forward to the accumulation of large profits. He and Molly decided that they would make the plant a model one, a place where labor would be

paid its highest figure. It would be an industry in which the profits would find a way to the workers as much as to the directors.

Molly, radiantly happy in the possession of the man she loved and revered for his goodness, was delighted with the future before them. She had always shed benison about her, had always been helpful to others and had with good deeds sweetened her own life as well as the lives of those about her.

The day was at hand for the opening of the new plant and the two motored to Greenville to select their workers, instruct them in their tasks and start the machinery of a new industry.

Mr. Bryan, his wife and his son were at the mill to witness the start of the new venture which promised so highly. June roses and nasturtiums were piled in a great bank on Nelson's desk. Mr. Bryan had arranged another desk opposite for Molly, knowing her interest in the mill people who would be chosen as operatives. There were many little gifts of gold and silver office utensils hidden under flowers for the bride and bridegroom.

Nelson had already instructed Molly in the

handling of the machines he had built, and the two worked with the girls patiently and taught them their simple duties.

The first pay-rolls were drawn; the first day's work was under way. Through the wide, open windows of the building came the heavy fragrance of early summer in the country. The grounds about the plant were bright with geraniums and beds of pansies, nasturtiums and peonies.

In the distant woodlands there was the flash of honeysuckle and jasmine. Sunshine flooded the whole building. John Nelson pressed an electric button on his desk, his wife's hand resting on his. There was the low hum of machinery starting. It settled into a purring, rhythmic beat.

The pretty mountain girls, all in their freshest gingham and muslins, all happy in the possession of well-paid tasks, stood by the knitting machines watching the flashing needles and the steady flow of the raw material that fed them. Molly Nelson paced the aisles, glad in her task as forewoman for a day.

Nelson's secretary brought him his first batch of mail in his new business. He trimmed the edges of the envelopes as he mused over his happi-

ness and the rosiness of the future. He had nothing to fear. Molly knew his secret, and there was no skeleton in their closet.

Nothing could cheat them of the taste of heaven that they had had. Whatever disaster —

A shadow fell athwart the room. A stranger was on the threshold.

Nelson's secretary went to the visitor and inquired his business. He said that he would like to talk to Mr. Nelson, and was offered a seat.

Nelson glanced at the man and opened a letter.

Fate was not playing any petty game with him. At the moment that the man hunter seated himself in his presence, he received word from his old probationer friend.

The letter, miserably scrawled and blotted, read:

“DEAR KID:— I ain't lofing that's why you didn't here from me. I got a chance to do things. Dont count on it to much but if the guy is living I'm going to take him to the D. A. office or die trying.

“BILL.”

The "D. A." office meant the office of the district attorney of the county and State of New York.

Nelson did not know the face of the man who sat waiting to address him. His visitor had resorted to the old trick of sitting with his back to the light.

"Well, sir?" asked Nelson.

The visitor half rose in his chair.

"I'd like to talk with you in private," he said.

"There is nothing that my secretary should not hear," Nelson informed him, surprised.

"Mebbe there is, Mr. Nelson," the visitor said, with a suggestion of warning in his voice.

"What is your business, please?"

The visitor approached the desk and moved the right lapel of his coat as he did so.

Nelson saw on the man's breast a gold badge. After the first curious glance he studied it, and from the inscription in blue enamel learned that his caller was a captain of detectives of New York City.

For the fraction of a second Nelson felt as though his blood had turned to ice-water.

Molly entered the office and her bright face

brought him in fuller realization of the tragedy that was at hand. But his years of self denial, his whole life of splendid control of himself were to stand him in good stead.

"What is it now, dear?" he asked calmly, smiling as she came to him.

"I just came in to tell you that the girls are doing splendidly," she said, sitting on the edge of his desk.

He forced a laugh to his lips.

"I am busy, Molly," he said in feigned reproof. "There is a gentleman here who desires to see me on some business." She turned and gave a glance to the detective.

"Well," she said, with a sigh, "I shall be back in twenty minutes."

She left the room, waving a kiss to her husband.

"Mr. Adams," he said to his secretary, "you are excused for half an hour. This gentleman desires to see me alone."

Adams put aside the correspondence he had started to go through and left the room.

"Now, sir," said Nelson to his visitor.

Kearney's keen little eyes were studying every

line in the countenance of the man before him. Suddenly he stared Nelson full in the face, with that trick of the detective which aims to disconcert the man under suspicion.

Nelson's eyes met his squarely. His heart was beating like a trip-hammer but his face was a mask.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"Mr. Montgomery," began Kearney.

"I am Mr. Nelson."

Cautiously, Kearney abandoned this line of attack.

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Nelson," he said, "but I am looking for James Montgomery, who came here about six years ago, got a job in one of the mills as a mechanic and rapidly made a name and fortune for himself."

"I never heard of him," replied Nelson, realizing that the change he had made in his appearance had produced uncertainty in the mind of his questioner. "May I ask your name and business?"

"I'm Mike Kearney of the New York detective bureau," the sleuth told him.

"You wish to arrest this man Montgomery?"

"Yes."

"What has he done?"

"Murder. He is an escaped convict."

"In such a quiet community as this we would soon know of the presence of a man of the criminal type."

Nelson rose from his chair and walked to the nearest window.

His powerful motor was near enough to the ledge for him to spring into it and be off in a flash. The thought came to him but he did not act upon it.

Kearney showed a slight trace of uneasiness. During his stay in Greenville he had heard nothing but praise for the virtues of the man he felt sure was the one he wanted. The poor were especially loud in their acclaim. The workers delighted in telling how fair he was in his dealings with them and how they benefited as much from his inventions as did the mill owners.

He had heard in a vague way of philanthropists among the rich, people who gave books or money to colleges or who kept up the settlements in the poor sections of New York. But he had not heard of any one man who gave all his life, the product



of his brains and the wealth that came to him so that as many people as possible around him would have happiness.

"I've got Montgomery's records with me," he said finally. "The Bertillon system makes it impossible for an officer of the law to make a mistake in identification. I got his pictures."

He reached into his inside coat pocket and pulled out the two Rogues' Gallery photographs of James Montgomery, handing them to the man standing at the window.

Nelson pretended to glance idly at the pictures. He beheld his own countenance as a boy when he was fresh from the country. He saw the strained look in the eyes and the heavy lines in the face, the misery and despair that were his that day eleven years before when he was taken by the police.

His hand trembled ever so slightly as he looked at the photographs.

"He does not look like a murderer or a criminal," he said, as if speaking to himself. "This looks to be the face of some poor boy, some country youth who might have made one mistake in life or who might have been unjustly accused. If

he committed any crime there must have been some reason other than sheer criminal instinct. I could hardly believe this boy a murderer."

He handed back the pictures to the detective.

"I have his finger-prints," said Kearney. He drew the Bertillon record from his pocket. His uneasiness increased. He mopped his brow and felt as if some strange, insidious influence was at work within him to sidetrack him from the path of duty.

"Now, if a man was suspected wrongly of being Montgomery," he suggested, "that man would only have to give his finger-prints and his true identity would be shown."

"I know nothing of such matters," replied Nelson.

He was prepared to meet any demand of the law save that of showing the little whorls, circles, islands and parabolæ in the cuticle of his fingers.

Kearney had taken a little box filled with charcoal dust from his waistcoat pocket and was spreading some of it on a sheet of white paper.

He was ready to make the demand for proof from John Nelson that he was not James Montgomery.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

**J**OHN NELSON stood watching the sleuth as he made ready for this single simple but awful test.

He determined to play for time. Why, he did not know, for a few seconds, minutes or even days would mean little to him now.

“If there is anything further you wish to say,” he told Kearney, “I must ask you to excuse me. This mill has just been opened and I am anxious about the new operatives. I would not have one of my girls hurt for all the money that might be made with machinery.”

He went to a wide door which opened directly into the operating room. Kearney heard the purring of the machinery increase in volume as Nelson passed through the open door.

He now felt sure that Nelson was James Montgomery and that the finger-print test would prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt. But he did not bay his delight as would the real hound when his

quarry was run down. He realized that the task before him was going to smack of danger. Nelson was fairly idolized by the people among whom he had found refuge from the law. These people were more or less primitive and had a sense of justice not built upon statutes reeled off yearly by Tammany legislators. If the news spread that Nelson had been made a prisoner and was to be taken from the community he had made better and happier for his existence there, at least the rough country people would protest. These people he had fed when hungry, had succored from distress and had sheltered when shelterless.

But he was still the implacable law officer, the machinelike product of machine government, and he would run no chance of his man slipping from him after all these years. He followed Nelson into the operating room and saw him greet his wife.

Upper and nether files of bright, new needles gnashed away steadily at their work, as the girls fed them with material and the finished product flowed into large wicker baskets.

A number of the young women, interested as young women are in a bride and groom, turned

at their work to watch, with many smiles and nods, the greeting between Nelson and Molly. One of the girls, with a heavy mass of black hair, had dropped her tresses because of the heat of the day. Nelson saw her turn with a smile to speak to another operative several feet away. In a second he realized her danger. A strand of her hair in one of the cogs of his machinery and she would meet a frightful death.

He forgot his own terrible predicament, although his own fate trembling in the balance, was even worse than death.

A braid of the girl's hair swept into the steel cogs of the machine she had been operating. At the pull on her scalp she uttered a shriek that rang through the building. The tireless double row of needles worked away within a few inches of the head of the unfortunate girl.

Her cry was echoed by a roar from Nelson to the man in charge of the switch controlling the current.

In two bounds he reached the girl and caught the fastened braid of hair with both hands. Her head fell under his right arm. He gave a mighty, twisting pull as the current was cut off and the

machine began to slow down. The hair was torn free of the cogs and the girl dropped in a dead faint to the floor. The needles still flashed, but slowly.

Kearney had run toward Nelson to help in the rescue of the girl if he could. He saw the mill president stagger, as if faint. His face was whiter than the sheet of paper he had used to hold his charcoal dust.

The detective saw Nelson's lips come together in a firm, blue line. The blood had left them. He spread forth his hands and in one terrible, ghastly moment made his sacrifice.

The two hands fell between the bright needles and the upper and nether files sunk into them, tearing through every finger, destroying completely the one strange stamp of absolute human individuality that Nature has provided — the record of the flesh itself.

No cry escaped Nelson's lips. The agony was keen, but what was such agony compared to that which would be his if the man from New York Police Headquarters slipped handcuffs upon him and took him from his wife, from the people he had worked with and for, to be taken away and be buried alive?

Molly had started toward her husband but her woman's nature was not equal to the horror of the moment. She fell face downward to the floor.

The machinery came to a full stop but the steel jaws had closed over Nelson's hands.

Kearney was the nearest man to him.

"Just move that iron rod to the right there," he heard Nelson say. "Move it slowly, just an inch backward."

Kearney obeyed and the jaws released their hold.

"There is a physician in the Reedy Mills," called Nelson, to one of the white-faced girls. "Telephone him quickly."

He turned to another girl, ignoring Kearney.

"Quick," he instructed her. "Tie some of this material tightly about my wrists."

He held forth his dripping hands.

The sleuth, his mind for a moment blank with horror at this deliberate sacrifice, grabbed up a piece of knitted material and made a tourniquet, first for one wrist and then for the other.

The mill physician arrived as this first aid work was accomplished. He quickly cleaned and

made aseptic the myriad little wounds in the hands of Nelson.

"The bones of four fingers in the right hand and of three in the left seem to be broken," he said, as he began bandaging. "They will mend easily. In a month, only the scars will be left."

Molly had come from her swoon and was holding her husband's bandaged hands lightly in her own, her tears wetting them. She was fully cognizant of all that had happened. She knew who the stranger was standing stupidly but with an ashen face near her.

Kearney slipped back to the office, picked up the photographs from Nelson's desk, put on his hat and made his way furtively from the building.



## CHAPTER XL

**I**NSPECTOR RANSCOMBE was cleaning out his desk.

The end of his police career had come. He had been placed on the retired list and an order from a new commissioner that morning had broken the news to him suddenly, viciously, that he was no longer wanted.

Lieutenant Jimmy Dunn, in the big room outside, had heard the "Old Man" roar. Ranscombe wanted to die in harness. He was old but he knew his job and had plenty of virility.

The new commissioner was entirely a political appointee. The "lid" had been kept on New York a little too long and the gamblers and others who made their fortunes by violating the law had squeezed down on the mayor through Tammany Hall. An election was at hand and the mayor had to obey or retire to private life for the rest of his days.

The scowl that had frightened many a crooked

detective lay heavily on his forehead, and in his eyes, as Ranscombe selected his personal papers from those that were departmental, was a glint of bitter protest.

There was a tap at the door.

"Who is it? What d'yuh want?" he growled angrily.

Kearney showed his face in the door, timidly.

"Come in, Boss?" he asked.

Ranscombe nodded and returned to his task.

"I found him, Boss," began Kearney.

"Found who?" snapped the inspector. "For God's sake get it out of your system and beat it."

"Jim Montgomery, who escaped from Sing Sing," explained Kearney, twisting a felt hat nervously in his hands.

The inspector looked up in surprise.

"Jim Montgomery?" he repeated, as he reached for a telegram on his desk.

"Yes, sir, but I didn't bring him back with me."

"Oh, you didn't? That was considerate. I guess you found out that we had the wrong man in stir, eh?"

"No, sir. It wasn't that. I found that he was

on the level all these years. He was just married and he changed his measurements so that all I could get to prove he was the man was his fingerprints. When I tried to get them from him he stuck his hands in some machinery and — ”

“ What! ”

The inspector half rose from his chair. His heavy jaws came together with a snap.

“ Yes, sir. He'd made a good name and rather than disgrace it and his wife and the people he lived among — ”

“ Hell, man, d'yuh mean to say that you let him make that sacrifice? ”

The inspector's face was splotted with the purple of a mighty wrath.

“ I didn't know he was going to do it, Boss,” Kearney replied, in a choking voice. “ Before God, I'd 'a' thrown down my job before I'd 'a' stood for that.”

Ranscombe brought his right fist down on his desk and shot out his lower jaw as he stared at Kearney.

“ You bloodhound,” he half screamed.

Kearney sat down in a chair beside the desk and half covered his face with his big, red paws.

"God, Boss," he groaned. "Montgomery was the kind of a man who would be crucified for those he loved."

"How did you trail him?"

"I went to his home town and found that his mother was dead," explained the man hunter. "I looked up the cemetery and found that the keeper was being paid for caring for the grave. I traced the letters enclosing the money and found that — the son."

"Blessed Virgin!" exclaimed the inspector. "Didn't you have heart enough or brains enough to stop?"

"When I reached him I wanted to stop. I wanted to stop, Boss. But you trained me never to let up."

Ranscombe kicked back his chair and paced the room, holding in his hands the telegram he had taken from his desk.

He shuddered when he paused before his sleuth whom he had trained so well.

"Read that," he said, handing him the telegram.

Kearney scratched his head as he read the words of this message:

“TUCSON, ARIZONA.

“RANSCOMBE,

“Chief Detectives, New York:

“Harry Gutzler, old yegg, dying here of consumption, confesses murder of Trueblood, bank watchman, New York, eleven years ago. Ex-convict named Hawkins found him in bad lands and brought him in.

“ALSOP, Chief.”

The inspector had gone to a window and was staring out of it abstractedly.

Kearney read the telegram a second and then a third time. He looked up at the broad back of his chief, placed the telegram on his desk and moved gingerly from the room. He did not lift his eyes or speak a word as he passed Jimmy Dunn, perched, round and cherublike, on a chair at the big desk of the assembly room. His traveling bag lay near the brass rail about the desk. He picked it up without stopping and departed from headquarters.

Kearney took a trolley to Duane Street and transferred to a horse-car to the further East Side.

The dust and grime of long travel were still on

him. In the return from the last lap in the long man hunt that had taken eleven years, he had had too many things to think over to bother about wash basins and combs and brushes.

On the stoop of the old-fashioned house in Oliver Street he found a group of old Irish women of the neighborhood. He knew their faces and nodded to them.

They huddled in a tighter knot of worried humanity.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Ye're none too soon," said one of them.

The others began to croon softly to themselves. He knew what that meant.

The grip fell from his hand, but he steadied himself and entered the house, mounting the stairs slowly. He walked into the kitchen of the little flat and found it spotlessly clean.

An old woman sat in a chair by the window, the beads of a rosary passing through her withered fingers.

She was not his mother!

Kearney removed his hat and crossed the threshold of his old mother's bedroom. She lay in bed and at first he thought her asleep.

Her hands, like brown wax, were clasped about the last copy of the "Key of Heaven" he had bought for her.

Beside the head of the bed two holy candles burned on a little table. A priest knelt on the floor, praying for the soul of the departed.

Kearney fell upon his knees and crossed himself once, twice and a third time.

A cry of distress came from the bottommost reaches of his heart in a low, pitifully sad whine.

"Aië! Aië! Aië!" it sounded.

It was the plaint of an animal with a soul.

## CHAPTER XLI

THE last act of Inspector Ranscombe, before turning over his office to his successor, was to send to John Nelson the original police records taken of James Montgomery. He offered his services in any step that he might take to have the courts of New York right the wrong that had been done him. The inspector also wrote confidentially to the governor of the State giving full details of the case.

Nelson, his hands again healed, and his wife and her family grateful that he had not been permanently crippled, took Mr. Bryan into his confidence and placed the whole matter before him, asking his advice.

The police of Tucson provided the New York authorities with ample details of the confession of the dying yegg. He was too far gone to send East a prisoner. When Nelson learned of this, he asked that efforts be made to let the man die



outside of prison. The yegg's own Maker had taken his case from the hands of the law.

Mr. Bryan engaged eminent counsel in New York to have the case of James Montgomery formally re-opened by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. A reversal of the verdict found by the lower court was entered in the records and "Acquitted" replaced the word "Convicted."

The name of Nelson had its value in the world, a value made by terrific effort, by kindness, by compassion, by struggle and by intellect. The woman he loved had taken that name. The people among whom he had worked had accepted it as representing all that was fine and high and noble.

The Supreme Court of South Carolina, in chambers, gave to James Montgomery the right to have legal use of the name of John Nelson. This document from the court was placed in the archives of the State without publicity.

While the last of these details, clearing away the past and making straight the future for Nelson, were being attended to by lawyers, John Nelson himself, his wife and her parents were

walking impatiently up and down the station platform of the Southern Railway in Greenville.

Mr. Bryan's finest horses and traps, his negro coachman in the freshest of linen suits and brown straw beavers, were there also. Guests and very important guests, evidently, were expected.

The crowd that always gathered to greet the express train from the north fidgeted with impatience. Perhaps a party of famous millionaires or renowned statesmen was coming to Greenville. The Bryan family had never turned out so conspicuously at the station in all its history.

The faint shriek of the locomotive in the distance brought the idlers nearer the tracks to peer northward and get a glimpse of the oncoming train.

Molly Nelson clapped her hands with delight. Mr. Bryan's face was wreathed with smiles. The coachmen flicked the ears of their fine teams and started them to capering jauntily and gaily.

If the President of the United States and his

cabinet had been coming to Greenville on that train, no finer welcome could have been given them.

The train thundered up and white-capped porters jumped from the steps of the coaches.

Among the passengers were two old people, one a bent, white-haired man with long arms and a face that would have been grotesque in its ugliness but for a smile of patience and gentleness that played about his clean-shaven lips; the other was a slender woman well beyond middle age, dressed in black, with a dolman and hat that had been long years out of fashion.

To this homely and humble pair the Bryans and the Nelsons rushed with cries of joyful greetings.

The Bryan servants fought to win the honor of carrying their two pieces of luggage. The coachmen made their horses dance afresh.

The crowd exclaimed in one long drawn "Ah" as the pretty Mrs. Nelson deliberately kissed the bent old visitor and then put her arm about the waist of the woman who had come with him.

A strange word of greeting for the ears of the

rich and the fashionable came from the lips of the old man to John Nelson.

“Kid!”

“Bill!” was the reply.

The stately Mrs. Bryan was making as much of the flustered, little, old woman, whom the crowd heard called by the name of “Jennie” as Mr. Bryan and Mr. Nelson were making of the homely man called “Bill.”

The train pulled out on its way to Atlanta and the party bundled into the fine carriages.

Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins were taken to their new home — their first real home. It might have been called a cottage in the South, but to the woman from Corlear’s Hook it was a mansion such as she had never dreamed of entering, even as a servant.

Fresh and spick and span in new paint, its garden a tangle of glorious blossoms, its piazzas wide and cool and its grounds stretching a good ten acres about it, Bill and his wife thought it the home of the Bryans.

They entered the house. It was finely but modestly furnished. Silver glistened on the sideboard and vases and jars of cut-glass were filled

with freshly cut flowers. Everywhere was a touch of femininity and cosiness, showing the hand of Molly Nelson.

There were comfortable desks and easy chairs, lamps that hung low and spread soft lights for old eyes, and many rugs. There was even a fat, sleepy tabby dozing on a cushion in one of the window seats.

Molly took Mrs. Hawkins to her bedroom, a front room with a verandah. She threw wide the deep windows and the East Side woman gazed out into the loveliness of the garden.

"It's grand," she gasped. "Mrs. Nelson, it's grand, ma'am. Central Park never had anything on this."

Nelson had brought behind them his old friend and helper, the man who was of the type that society had given up as unregenerate. The demands of his probation from Sing Sing had all been met. The rest of his life was to be what he would make it for himself.

Nelson signalled to Molly to come to him.

"We are going to leave you two together for awhile," he said to the old probationer. "This is your home and your wife's home."

Bill's shaggy eyebrows were raised in surprise.

"You mean for a visit?" he asked.

"I mean forever," replied Nelson. "You will find the deeds in your desk down-stairs."

Nelson drew Molly from the room.

As they closed the door they heard Mrs. Hawkins sobbing.

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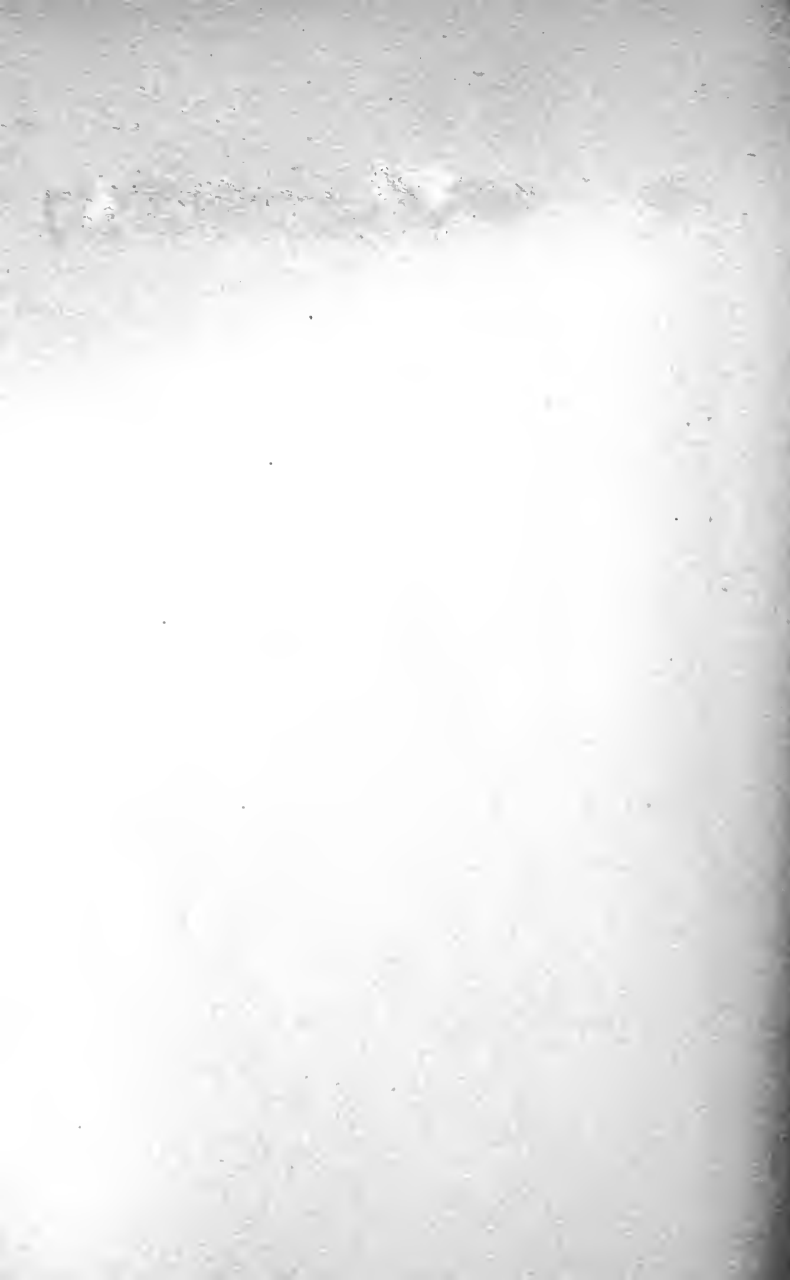
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